



# Postcolonialism and Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy: Reinterpreting the Ambalat Dispute Toward Institutional Reform and Regional Solidarity in Southeast Asia

Muhammad Alfian Maulana

## INSTITUTION/ AFFILIATION

Political Science Study Program, Udayana University, Bali, Indonesia

## CORRESPONDENCE

Muhammad Alfian Maulana, Udayana University, Jl. Kampus Unud Jimbaran Badung, Bali 80361 (Kampus I)

Email: [alfian\\_maulana@unud.ac.id](mailto:alfian_maulana@unud.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

This study examines Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in the Ambalat maritime dispute with Malaysia under the post-2024 Prabowo administration. Using Postcolonial International Relations theory and Le Mière's Cooperative Maritime Diplomacy framework, it analyzes how colonial legacies are reframed as strategic resources. Through critical discourse analysis of speeches, bilateral statements, and ASEAN engagements (October 2024–2025), the study identifies three dimensions. First, the narrative dimension repositions Malaysia as a shared inheritor of colonial borders rather than an adversary. Second, the practical dimension institutionalizes this narrative through joint development mechanisms separating resource management from sovereignty disputes. Third, the institutional dimension expands this approach into ASEAN maritime governance discourse. The study argues that postcolonial identity operates as active diplomatic agency, conceptualized as postcolonial maritime diplomacy.

## KEYWORDS

Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy; Institutional Reform; Postcolonialism; Regional Cooperation



## INTRODUCTION

In the complex geopolitical dynamics of Southeast Asia, which are marked by colonial legacies and resource competition, the Ambalat dispute has once again assumed a significant position in Indonesia's foreign policy. This issue is not merely a maritime border dispute between two neighboring countries, but rather a representation of how the colonial past continues to shape the political configuration and inter-state relations in the region. Following the election of Prabowo Subianto as a President of the Republic of Indonesia in 2024, the Indonesian government affirmed its commitment to resolving various pending border issues, including Ambalat, as part of a broader agenda to strengthen sovereignty and reorganize the national maritime strategy ([Hakim et al, 2025](#)).

The Ambalat dispute itself is a strategic issue that surfaced in the early 2000s, when Malaysia granted oil and gas exploration permits to foreign companies in a sea area also claimed by Indonesia ([Hadi, 2014](#)). The Ambalat region, located in the Sulawesi Sea east of Kalimantan, has enormous energy resource potential (see figure 1) ([Supancana, 2015](#)). Malaysia's actions triggered diplomatic protests from Indonesia, which considered that the region historically and legally fell under Indonesian jurisdiction based on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ([Druce & Baikoeni, 2016](#)). Since then, the Ambalat issue has become a sensitive point in Indonesia-Malaysia relations, demonstrating how differences in the interpretation of international legal documents and colonial treaties can lead to prolonged disputes.

The selection of the post-2024 Indonesian administration as the primary object of analysis in this study is not arbitrary. The inauguration of President Prabowo Subianto in October 2024 marked a significant shift in Indonesia's foreign policy orientation, particularly in its approach to maritime sovereignty disputes. Unlike the preceding Joko Widodo administration, which largely pursued a pragmatic and economic-development-centered foreign policy framed around the *Poros Maritim Dunia* (Global Maritime Fulcrum) doctrine, the Prabowo administration has demonstrated a more assertive nationalist posture in territorial matters, rooted in his background as a military commander and his long-standing rhetorical emphasis on state sovereignty ([Yadav, 2025](#)). Furthermore, the post-2024 period coincides with renewed regional tensions in the South China Sea and Sulawesi Sea, making it a critical juncture for reassessing how Indonesia institutionally and diplomatically manages overlapping maritime claims. This transitional moment offers a unique analytical window to examine whether Indonesia's postcolonial maritime identity is being reconfigured under new political leadership, and whether structural reforms in bilateral dispute mechanisms are being pursued or neglected.

In the context of bilateral relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, the Ambalat dispute has a very complex dimension because it touches on deep political, economic, and national identity aspects that have existed for decades. Both countries claim the 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> area based on their respective historical and legal arguments, dating back to 1979 when

Malaysia published a controversial base map. The potential for abundant natural resources, particularly oil and natural gas reserves estimated at around 700 million barrels, has strengthened both sides' resolve to maintain their claims firmly and consistently (Nuruzzaman, 2025).

## Ambalat Sea Block Disputed

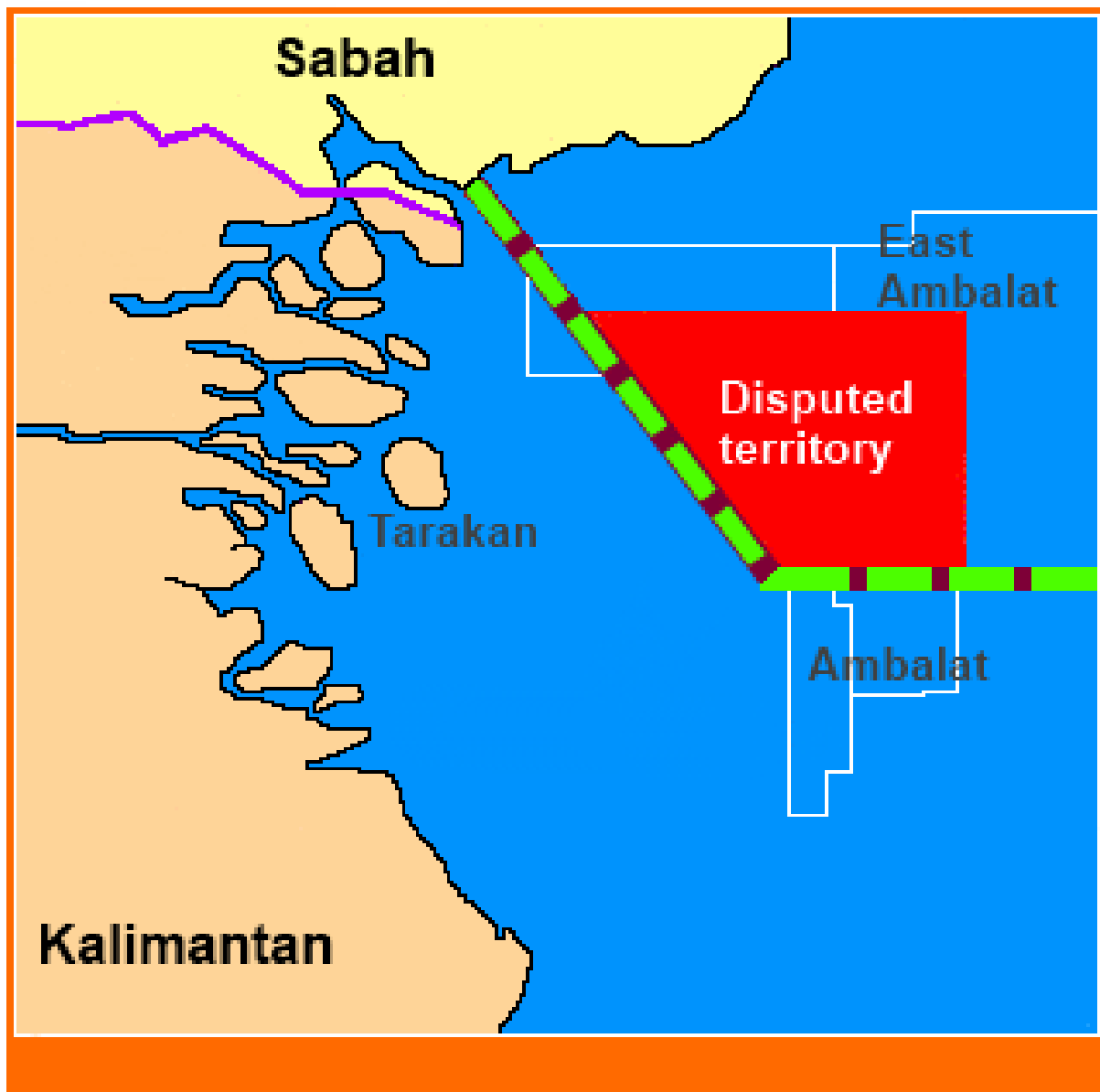


Figure 1. Ambalat Region.

Source: Adapted from Hunter (2025).

Direct military tensions arose in February and March 2005 when the Indonesian Navy (TNI) and the Royal Malaysian Navy (TLDM) deployed frigates and warships to the Ambalat

block, resulting in a maritime standoff that nearly escalated into armed conflict after Indonesian warships locked their radars onto Malaysian ships. In response to this incident, Indonesia deployed six additional warships and F-16 fighter jets to the border, while Malaysia increased its military alert status in Sabah ([Hadi, 2014](#)). However, tensions flared again in May 2009 when Malaysian warships re-entered the Ambalat block, forcing Indonesia to conduct a military interception and submit a strong protest note to Kuala Lumpur ([Bustami & Maksum, 2022](#)). Although there were no casualties, these two incidents confirmed that the Ambalat dispute had the potential to escalate into a broader armed conflict.

Historically, the roots of the Ambalat dispute cannot be separated from the colonial agreements between the Netherlands and Britain that divided Southeast Asia in the 19th century. Agreements such as the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 and the Boundary Agreement of 1891 established lines of division of power without considering the social and geographical realities of local communities ([Harefa et al., 2024](#)). When countries in the region gained their independence, these artificial boundaries were inherited as the basis for modern delimitation. This has been the source of various border disputes in Southeast Asia, including Ambalat, because these lines do not fully reflect contemporary geographical and political realities ([Lukito & Saat, 2023](#)).

In the broader academic context, studies on maritime diplomacy and border disputes in Southeast Asia reveal a close relationship between colonial heritage, regional politics, and regional institutions. The literature highlights how conflicts, such as Ambalat, cannot be separated from colonial constructs that imposed artificial boundaries and structures of power inequality. Relevant scholarship can be grouped into three streams: (1) studies on maritime security and governance in the Asia-Pacific that emphasize institutional weaknesses in conflict management ([Bindenagel, 2016](#)); (2) analyses of ASEAN's institutional evolution through the "ASEAN Way" of consultation and consensus ([Koldunova, 2018](#)); and (3) contemporary examinations of Indonesian maritime diplomacy as an instrument of postcolonial identity ([Rijal, 2019](#)). [Bindenagel \(2016\)](#) argues that, unlike Europe's robust institutional structures, the Asia-Pacific's reliance on loose mechanisms like ASEAN operating on principles of consultation and consensus makes the region vulnerable to conflict escalation driven by nationalism rooted in historical justification ([Bindenagel, 2016](#)). This framework acknowledges that countries perceive maritime territories not only as economic resources but also as symbols of national sovereignty; however, it does not fully address the underlying historical and colonial dimensions of identity.

Further literature on institutional studies in Southeast Asia often refers to the concept of the "ASEAN Way," as explained by [Koldunova \(2018\)](#). She traces how the principles of deliberation and consensus, rooted in local socio-cultural practices, became the foundation of ASEAN diplomacy. The "ASEAN Way" emphasizes peaceful resolution, non-intervention, and respect for national sovereignty, which during the Cold War effectively prevented ideological polarization. However, Koldunova highlights the inherent paradox of this model:

while it maintains regional stability, it creates normative stagnation by overemphasizing consensus and avoiding intervention. As a result, many bilateral disputes in Southeast Asia, including Sipadan-Ligitan, Pedra Branca, Preah Vihear, and Ambalat, were ultimately brought to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) instead of being resolved regionally. She refers to this phenomenon as "upturned subsidiarity" – the tendency of ASEAN countries to "hand over" dispute resolution to global institutions, reflecting the region's weak institutional capacity to handle conflicts internally ([Koldunova, 2018](#)).

Finally, as a complement to these theoretical frameworks, [Rijal's \(2019\)](#) study on "Smart Maritime Diplomacy" provides essential empirical contributions by highlighting how Indonesia, under the vision of the Global Maritime Fulcrum, seeks to utilize maritime diplomacy not only to strengthen its economic and maritime security positions but also to assert its identity as a peaceful, inclusive, cooperation-based maritime power. This approach emphasizes three aspects: (1) building Indonesia's image as a benign maritime power; (2) strengthening cross-border cooperation on non-traditional security issues; and (3) reframing maritime diplomacy as a cultural and symbolic instrument ([Rijal, 2019](#)). However, this study does not explicitly link Indonesia's maritime identity strategy to regional institutional reform.

Considering the historical complexity and political sensitivity surrounding the Ambalat dispute, Indonesia's decision to pursue a cooperative diplomatic approach is a notable phenomenon worthy of in-depth analysis. Instead of taking a confrontational approach, such as deploying military forces or aggressive legal measures in international forums, the Indonesian government has emphasized the importance of bilateral dialogue, ongoing negotiations, and regional cooperation through ASEAN mechanisms as the primary strategy for resolving differences. This approach directly reflects Indonesia's new orientation in foreign policy, which prioritizes regional stability and international image amid increasingly dynamic and competitive geopolitical rivalries in Southeast Asia.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the Ambalat issue through the lens of Indonesia's cooperative diplomacy, placing the dynamics of the two countries' relationship in the context of the shift in foreign policy orientation after 2024. A conceptual gap is apparent in existing literature: while [Bindenagel \(2016\)](#) highlights the need for multilateral institutional design, it does not address the underlying historical and colonial identity dimensions. [Koldunova \(2018\)](#) focuses on ASEAN regional norms but ignores the performative and symbolic aspects of postcolonial diplomacy. Meanwhile, [Rijal \(2019\)](#) explains Indonesia's maritime identity strategy but does not explicitly link it to regional institutional reform. This study attempts to bridge these three streams by integrating postcolonial international relations theory and the concept of cooperative maritime diplomacy to reinterpret Indonesian diplomacy in the Ambalat dispute not merely as a marine border conflict, but as an arena for historical reconciliation and the formation of regional solidarity.

This study examines how Indonesia's diplomatic strategy toward the Ambalat dispute has been reoriented under the post-2024 Prabowo administration, focusing on how this shift

reflects the interplay between postcolonial identity and maritime diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Moving beyond conventional approaches that frame the dispute as a sovereignty issue requiring legal or military resolution, the study highlights Indonesia's strategic use of colonial historical consciousness to reframe the dispute through shared postcolonial inheritance, enabling cooperative arrangements with Malaysia while preserving sovereign claims and extending this approach into a broader ASEAN normative agenda. It contributes to the literature in three key ways: first, by applying postcolonial IR theory to analyze how colonial memory is mobilized as a strategic resource across multiple diplomatic levels; second, by integrating postcolonial theory ([Edward Said, 1978](#); [Homi K. Bhabha, 2004](#); [Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1988](#)) with [Christian Le Mière's \(2014\)](#) cooperative maritime diplomacy framework into a unified analytical model; and third, by demonstrating how postcolonial narratives are operationalized through joint development arrangements that separate resource management from sovereignty claims, showing that discursive constructions are inseparable from institutional outcomes and offering broader insights for managing similar postcolonial maritime disputes in Southeast Asia.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Postcolonial International Relations Theory

Postcolonial international relations theory emerged in response to the dominance of Western paradigms, including realism, liberalism, and constructivism, which were deemed inadequate in capturing the historical and epistemological experiences of the non-Western world. [Said \(1978\)](#) demonstrates through Orientalism that the modern knowledge system about the "East" was shaped by colonial discourse, which normalized the hierarchy between the West and the non-West, thereby influencing how international subjects are understood to this day ([Said, 1978](#)). This criticism is reinforced by [Gayatri Spivak \(1988\)](#), who, through the concept of subaltern, explains that colonialism not only produces material power structures but also silences the voices of subjects outside the dominant discourse. In the context of international relations, the position of postcolonial countries often resembles that of subalterns: they are present in the global system but do not fully possess the epistemic capacity to determine their own narratives and interests ([Spivak, 1988](#)). [Bhabha \(2004\)](#) then adds that colonialism shapes the identity of postcolonial states as hybrid and ambivalent entities through the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and third space, so that the diplomatic responses of non-Western states are never completely detached from their colonial heritage nor completely submissive to Western global structures. These three ideas underscore that colonialism is an epistemic legacy that continues to influence contemporary international relations, shaping the way postcolonial states perceive themselves, interpret "the other," and interact within a global system founded on colonial principles ([Bhabha, 2004](#)).

Within this framework, interstate relations in Southeast Asia, including maritime disputes such as Ambalat, cannot be separated from the boundaries and identity constructions

inherited from European colonialism ([Solomon, 1970](#)). Agreements such as the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 and the Boundary Agreement of 1891 created a geopolitical structure that divided the social, cultural, and economic space of local communities into artificial territorial entities ([Carruthers, 2023](#)). After independence, Southeast Asian countries inherited these boundaries as the basis for modern sovereignty, even though, socially and historically, these lines had no meaning for the communities living in the border areas ([Andělová, 2017](#)).

Thus, postcolonial theory views the Ambalat dispute not as the result of a contemporary conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, but as an extension of the colonial logic of "divide et impera" that continues to be reproduced in the modern international system. In Homi Bhabha's terms, these borders are hybrid zones, where national identities, international law, and colonial memories overlap ([Bhabha, 2004](#)). Postcolonial states must face a double dilemma: maintaining modern sovereignty while renegotiating their underlying colonial heritage.

It is in this context that Indonesia's diplomacy can be understood as a practice of "diplomatic decolonization." Instead of resorting to military force or international legal litigation, Indonesia chooses to resolve disputes through historical awareness and regional solidarity. This approach aligns with [Bhambra's \(2014\)](#) argument about connected histories, specifically the need to connect cross-national colonial experiences to create a more inclusive form of global politics. By positioning Malaysia not as an opponent but as a fellow heir to colonial wounds, Indonesia has repositioned its bilateral relations epistemically. This strategy transforms the logic of "conflict over resources" into "dialogue over shared history."

### **The Concept of Cooperative Maritime Diplomacy**

The second framework that complements postcolonial theory is the concept of cooperative maritime diplomacy, as developed by [Christian Le Mière \(2014\)](#). In his work *Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, [Le Mière \(2014\)](#) defines maritime diplomacy as "*the use of naval and maritime resources to pursue diplomatic objectives through cooperation, confidence building, and presence*" (pp. 7-13). This concept emphasizes that naval power is not always used for coercion, but can also be a tool for building trust and regional solidarity.

[Le Mière \(2014\)](#) classifies maritime diplomacy into three main dimensions: preventive maritime diplomacy, which aims to prevent conflict escalation through symbolic presence and technical cooperation; proactive maritime diplomacy, which seeks to resolve conflicts through diplomatic means; and reactive maritime diplomacy, which responds to disputes through diplomatic means. Confidence-building maritime diplomacy: to build trust through joint exercises, joint patrols, or information exchange. Cooperative maritime diplomacy: to build long-term relationships based on shared interests, such as marine resource management, environmental protection, or non-traditional law enforcement. This approach is relevant in the context of Southeast Asia, where most countries share maritime borders and have intertwined colonial histories ([Mière, 2014](#)). In situations such as the Ambalat dispute, [Le](#)

[Mière's \(2014\)](#) approach provides an alternative to confrontational strategies by grounding political diplomacy in technical cooperation.

### **Institutional Dimension: ASEAN Normative Transformation**

The third theoretical pillar of this study draws on institutional critique of the ASEAN Way, particularly as developed by [Koldunova \(2018\)](#), to examine whether and how regional norms in Southeast Asia are capable of transformation in response to postcolonial diplomatic pressures. Koldunova identifies a structural paradox at the heart of ASEAN's institutional design: the principles of non-intervention, consultation, and consensus-based decision-making — rooted in the postcolonial experiences of its founding member states — maintain regional stability but simultaneously produce normative stagnation. This stagnation manifests most clearly in ASEAN's recurrent inability to resolve bilateral maritime disputes internally, a pattern she terms "upturned subsidiarity," wherein member states routinely transfer dispute resolution to external institutions such as the International Court of Justice rather than resolving them within regional frameworks ([Koldunova, 2018](#)).

This study applies this institutional critique to examine how Indonesia's Ambalat diplomacy engages with — and potentially challenges — these entrenched norms. Crucially, the analysis is not limited to describing ASEAN's institutional limitations; it examines whether Indonesia's deployment of postcolonial solidarity discourse constitutes a form of norm entrepreneurship ([Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998](#)), defined as the deliberate effort by a state actor to reframe existing normative understandings and persuade other actors to adopt alternative behavioral standards. Within this framework, Indonesia's insistence on embedding shared colonial memory as a legitimate basis for maritime dispute management is read not merely as bilateral rhetoric, but as a normative proposition directed at ASEAN's institutional architecture.

It is important to clarify the scope of this institutional dimension. This study does not claim that ASEAN norms have already been transformed, nor does it argue that Indonesia's efforts have produced measurable structural change within the organization. Rather, it examines Indonesia's discursive and diplomatic positioning as the early stage of a normative challenge—one that, if sustained and institutionally operationalized, could over time contribute to a gradual reconfiguration of how ASEAN frames and addresses colonial-era maritime disputes. This analytical modesty is essential for maintaining the credibility of interpretive claims within the limits of the available evidence.

### **Applying Postcolonial Interpretation and Cooperative Maritime Diplomacy in the Ambalat Dispute**

To operationalize both in the context of the Ambalat dispute, this study translates the theoretical elements into three interrelated dimensions of analysis: the Narrative Dimension, which involves deconstructing the discourse of the Colonial Legacy; the Practical Dimension,

which encompasses cooperative maritime diplomacy mechanisms; and the Institutional Dimension, which involves ASEAN Normative Transformation.

### **Narrative Dimension: Reconstruction of Colonial Legacy Discourse**

The narrative dimension employs postcolonial discourse analysis ([Said, 1978](#)) to examine how Indonesia reframes the Ambalat dispute as a consequence of its colonial legacy, rather than merely a contemporary territorial dispute. Operationalization is carried out through several empirical indicators; (a) tracing specific terminology such as "divide et impera," "19th century agreements," and "colonial legacy" in Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents and statements by President Prabowo ([Kamil & Ramadhan, 2025](#); [Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2026](#)); (b) framing analysis that depicts Malaysia as a "fellow inheritor," not an antagonist ([Bhabha, 2004](#)). This dimension places the dispute within the framework of Southeast Asia's hybrid identity as described by [Bhabha \(2004\)](#), in which modern boundaries are understood as historical constructions that are renegotiated through diplomatic narratives.

### **Practical Dimension: Cooperative Maritime Diplomacy Mechanisms**

The second dimension operationalizes [Christian Le Mière's \(2014\)](#) concept of cooperative maritime diplomacy to trace the concrete practices used by Indonesia in managing the Ambalat tension. The operationalization includes cooperative resource management mechanisms, such as joint development options, and a "coexistence without concession" formula that enables cooperation without compromising sovereignty claims. This analysis is used to explore how these mechanisms function not only as technical measures, but also as performative diplomacy that rejects the colonial logic of zero-sum territoriality and builds a trust regime that enables functional collaboration to replace antagonism.

### **Institutional Dimension: Normative Transformation of ASEAN**

The third dimension examines how the Ambalat experience relates to Indonesia's efforts to reinterpret ASEAN regional norms through a postcolonial lens, adopting [Koldunova's \(2018\)](#) critique of the limitations of the ASEAN Way. Operationalization includes: (a) analysis of Indonesian diplomatic statements emphasizing "shared colonial memory" to explain the need to adjust the principle of non-intervention; (b) tracing Indonesia's initiatives in strengthening sub-regional mechanisms that are more inclusive of historical issues and colonial boundaries; (c) identifying the influence of the Ambalat experience on the direction of normative renewal, including Indonesia's push for ASEAN to be more historically reflective. This dimension is used to examine how Indonesian diplomacy aims to encourage institutional transformation from quiet diplomacy to regional solidarity based on shared historical memory.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design using discourse analysis to examine how postcolonial narratives and cooperative maritime diplomacy shape Indonesia's approach to the Ambalat dispute. The qualitative approach is chosen to interpret meaning, identity construction, and symbolic representations within diplomatic texts, rather than to measure variables. Discourse analysis enables the study to reveal how colonial legacies and diplomatic strategies are articulated in narratives on sovereignty and regional cooperation.

Data were collected through systematic document-based research focusing on elite-level diplomatic discourse produced by Indonesian government actors between October 2024 and January 2026.<sup>1</sup> This timeframe captures the early phase of the Prabowo administration and allows comparison with earlier legalistic and security-oriented approaches. Primary sources include presidential speeches, bilateral summit joint statements, ministerial remarks, and official press releases. Secondary sources, such as academic literature and reputable Indonesian media, are used to supplement gaps and provide contextual grounding.

The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, texts are selected and coded to identify themes related to sovereignty, identity, historical memory, and cooperation, guided by postcolonial theory and maritime diplomacy frameworks. Second, discourse interpretation examines how Ambalat is reframed as a product of colonial boundary imposition, emphasizing narrative strategies and rhetorical constructions. Third, findings are synthesized to assess their alignment with broader ASEAN norms and regional conflict management practices. Credibility is ensured through triangulation across multiple sources and alignment with existing scholarship, producing a contextualized interpretation rather than generalizable conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the integrated findings and analysis of Indonesia's diplomatic approach to the Ambalat dispute following the 2024 political transition. Drawing on a comprehensive discourse analysis of diplomatic artifacts, official documents, presidential addresses, and curated media coverage from October 2024 to October 2025, the discussion focuses on answering the central research question regarding Indonesia's persistent pursuit of cooperative diplomacy, despite the dispute's direct relation to maritime sovereignty and highly sensitive national identity dimensions.

The analysis reveals a multi-layered strategy operating through narrative reconstruction, practical cooperation mechanisms, and institutional transformation that collectively function as mutually reinforcing elements. Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "postcolonial maritime diplomacy architecture": this refers to the

---

<sup>1</sup>This specific period was established and refined during the revision phase to appropriately scope the analysis of elite-level diplomatic discourse.

structured and intentional configuration of diplomatic practices in which a postcolonial state draws on shared colonial memory to reframe maritime disputes, build cooperative institutional arrangements, and reshape regional norms—not as isolated acts, but as an integrated system of meaning-making and governance ([Ashcroft et al., 2024](#); [Said, 1978](#)). With this understanding, the three dimensions identified in this study collectively constitute such an architecture, operating as cohesive and interdependent pillars of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy ([LeMière, 2014](#)). Rather than treating these dimensions separately, this integrated examination demonstrates how Indonesia systematically converts historical trauma into regional solidarity, transforming the Ambalat dispute from a potential flashpoint into an instrument for strengthening Southeast Asian cohesion ([Acharya, 2009](#)). This approach not only reframes territorial conflicts as structural problems inherited from colonialism but also operationalizes this reframing through concrete institutional proposals and regional normative reform initiatives ([Wendt, 1999](#)), representing a strategic shift toward what can be termed postcolonial maritime diplomacy.

### **The Narrative Dimension: Reconstructing Postcolonial Identity and Moral Legitimacy**

Prior to October 2024, Indonesian diplomatic discourse on the Ambalat dispute was predominantly framed in legalistic and security-oriented terms. Official statements under the Joko Widodo administration consistently emphasized UNCLOS provisions, territorial integrity, and military readiness as the primary reference points, with colonial history referenced only incidentally and without structural analytical weight ([Hadi, 2014](#); [Setiawan, 2024](#)). Regional cooperation was framed as a pragmatic necessity rather than as a postcolonial imperative, and the language of shared colonial burden was largely absent from formal diplomatic communications.

Against this baseline, the analysis reveals a systematic discursive shift following President Prabowo Subianto's inauguration in October 2024. An examination of primary sources from October 2024 to October 2025—including presidential speeches, Foreign Minister Sugiono's ministerial statements, and bilateral summit communications—reveals that colonial historical consciousness has been incorporated as a structurally recurring explanatory framework rather than incidental rhetorical ornamentation. This shift is observable across multiple communicative contexts: presidential address manuscripts, ministerial briefings, and bilateral joint statements with Malaysia consistently attribute border complexity to colonial boundary-making rather than to contemporary state conduct. President Prabowo's State Address at the Annual MPR Session on 15 August 2025 provides the clearest evidence of this reorientation, in which the border dispute is explicitly framed as a legacy of colonialism and the politics of *devide et impera* is invoked as the structural mechanism through which colonial boundary-making continues to generate friction between neighboring nations ([Subianto, 2025](#)). This framing is further reinforced at the bilateral level by Prabowo's joint press statement with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on 27 June

2025, in which both nations are positioned as partners in managing a shared inherited problem rather than adversaries in a territorial contest ([Anugrahanto, 2025](#)). Across these contexts, the postcolonial framing performs a consistent discursive function: it repositions the Ambalat dispute from a bilateral territorial disagreement into a shared postcolonial inheritance, recasting both Indonesia and Malaysia from adversaries into co-inheritors of an unjust colonial cartography.

The substance and rhetorical architecture of this discursive shift is most fully expressed in the 15 August 2025 State Address. In this speech, President Prabowo explicitly characterized the border dispute as a "colonial legacy" stemming from the unilateral drawing of border lines by European powers, stating:

*"Masalah ini adalah warisan dari kolonialis, warisan dari penjajah. Belanda datang dengan Inggris, dia bikin garis seenak jidatnya"* ("This problem is a legacy of colonialism, a legacy of the colonisers. The Dutch came with the English, they drew borders as they pleased") ([Subianto, 2025](#)).

He further warned that such colonial boundary-making was designed to pit neighbouring nations against each other through the politics of *devide et impera*, cautioning:

*"Janganlah kita naif. Janganlah kita terus-menerus mau diadu domba"* ("Let us not be naive. Let us not continuously allow ourselves to be pitted against one another") ([Subianto, 2025](#)).

Crucially, this solidarity framing is not confined to domestic address: in his joint press statement with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at Istana Merdeka, Jakarta, on 27 June 2025, President Prabowo simultaneously emphasized that Indonesia and Malaysia remain positioned as "friends" and "kindred nations" ("*sahabat*" dan "*satu rumpun*") that must avoid conflict ([Kamil & Ramadhan, 2025](#)). The consistency of this framing across both a domestic presidential address and a bilateral diplomatic forum reinforces its character as a deliberate and sustained discursive strategy rather than a context-specific rhetorical choice. It is this combination — attributing the dispute's origins to colonial powers, warning against being manipulated by their legacy, and affirming solidarity with Malaysia across multiple diplomatic settings—that constitutes the foundational rhetorical architecture of Indonesia's postcolonial maritime diplomacy under the Prabowo administration.

It is worth first examining what this language performs at the level of diplomatic relations. Prabowo's statement performs three distinct discursive moves. First, it externalizes the source of conflict: the dispute is no longer produced by Indonesian or Malaysian state conduct, but by a third party—the colonial powers—who no longer exist as active actors. This externalization effectively removes mutual blame from the bilateral relationship. Second, it



relocates the boundary itself as the problem rather than either state's territorial claim, which allows both parties to question the boundary's legitimacy without either side conceding sovereign rights. Third, and most consequentially, it re-categorizes Malaysia's subject position: rather than being framed as an adversarial "Other" encroaching on Indonesian sovereignty, Malaysia is recast as a co-victim of the same colonial imposition—a "fellow inheritor" of an unjust cartography. The phrase *satu rumpun* ("one kin") reinforces this re-categorization by invoking shared ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage that predates and transcends the colonial boundary itself.

It is only at this point—once the discursive mechanism has been established—that postcolonial theory becomes analytically necessary to explain why this move is possible and what makes it effective. Within [Said's framework \(1978\)](#), colonial discourse constructed territorial boundaries as products of superior Western rationality, positioning local communities as passive objects of territorialization rather than active subjects of their own spatial history. By naming the colonial powers as the originating agents of the dispute, Prabowo effectively inverts this knowledge hierarchy: Indonesia and Malaysia are repositioned as subjects reclaiming the right to narrate their own boundaries, while the colonial boundary itself is delegitimized as an external imposition. By reframing the Ambalat dispute as a shared problem inherited from colonialism, Indonesia deconstructs the legitimacy of these artificial boundaries while simultaneously constructing a new bilateral subject position grounded in postcolonial solidarity rather than territorial rivalry.

This Saidian inversion finds its fuller expression in the specific construction of Malaysia as a "fellow inheritor"—a move that warrants examination through [Bhabha's \(2004\)](#) concepts of hybridity and third space. By describing Malaysia as *satu rumpun*—a community of shared origin—Prabowo's framing does not merely soften diplomatic tone; it actively reconstructs the identity boundary of the dispute. The "we" in his address is no longer Indonesia alone defending its sovereign claim, but a broader postcolonial collectivity that includes Malaysia as a co-subject of historical injustice. This rhetorical expansion of solidarity transforms the dispute's fundamental grammar: what was previously structured as Indonesia versus Malaysia becomes Indonesia and Malaysia versus a colonial legacy that neither chose and both inherited. Bhabha argues that postcolonial identities remain perpetually divided between memories of historical trauma and demands of modern sovereignty, and it is in this in-between space that new forms of political subjectivity—such as the "fellow inheritor" positioning Prabowo enacts—become possible and strategically deployable. The Ambalat dispute is thus transformed from a zero-sum territorial contest into a shared discursive space where both nations can simultaneously assert sovereignty and construct solidarity, occupying what Bhabha would call the third space between colonial inheritance and postcolonial aspiration.



The practical operationalization of this narrative dimension is evident in the consistent avoidance of Othering Malaysia. In a public statement delivered on 15 August 2025, President Prabowo addressed the border dispute by asserting:

"The Dutch came with the British, and they drew the line as they pleased. They drew the line that is now causing trouble for us (Indonesia & Malaysia)." ([Subianto, 2025](#))

This statement reinforces the construction that both Indonesia and Malaysia equally inherit this artificial problem, with the parenthetical clarification of "us" referring explicitly to both nations as co-inheritors of colonial boundary-making. Within this framework, the Indonesian government views the Ambalat dispute not as an interstate conflict but as a structural legacy that requires resolution through peaceful means, technical cooperation, and joint development options, rather than military confrontation.

This approach reflects [Spivak's \(1988\)](#) concept of strategic essentialism, in which subaltern actors temporarily assert a collective identity to claim agency in global discourse. By deploying phrases such as "one family" and "family friends," Indonesia does not negate differences in interests; rather, it utilizes cultural essentialism as a strategic resource to soften confrontational logic. Discursively, this framing creates rhetorical constraints on escalation, as it becomes difficult to portray Malaysia as "kin" while simultaneously legitimizing adversarial conduct. While the domestic political effects of this narrative cannot be empirically demonstrated in this study due to the absence of systematic public opinion data, it is reasonable to interpret the discourse as an attempt to moderate nationalist pressures surrounding the Ambalat issue. Regionally, however, the implications are more observable: the narrative helps generate normative capital, allowing Indonesia to project itself as a benign maritime power unencumbered by offensive power politics.

The timing of this narrative intensification—precisely at the moment of national leadership transition—reveals its calculated nature. The Prabowo administration, entering office with an image of firm leadership and a more assertive Global Maritime Fulcrum vision, paradoxically employs a cooperative-postcolonial narrative to balance domestic expectations of sovereign assertiveness with regional stabilization imperatives. This suggests that postcolonial maritime diplomacy functions not merely as reactive rhetoric, but as a proactive, calculated performative act that transforms historical trauma into a soft power narrative. The discourse analysis identifies this as a systematic pattern rather than isolated rhetoric, with postcolonial terminology appearing across multiple diplomatic artifacts, including Ministry policy documents, presidential addresses at regional forums, and official press releases. This consistency indicates the institutionalization of a narrative strategy rather than an individual leader's rhetorical preference.



## The Practical Dimension: Institutionalizing Cooperative Maritime Diplomacy

Complementing the narrative reconstruction, findings on the practical dimension demonstrate that post-2024 Indonesia translates postcolonial discourse into institutionalized mechanisms of cooperative maritime diplomacy. This is most directly evidenced in the joint press statement delivered by President Prabowo Subianto alongside Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at Istana Merdeka on 27 June 2025, in which Prabowo explicitly stated:

*"Contoh masalah Ambalat, kita sepakat bahwa sambil kita saling menyelesaikan masalah-masalah hukum, kita sudah ingin mulai dengan kerjasama ekonomi yang kita sebut joint development."* ("Take the Ambalat issue — we agree that while we continue resolving the legal questions, we already want to begin economic cooperation that we call joint development (JD)") ([Sekretariat Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2025](#)).

This statement confirms that the joint development concept is not merely a discursive proposition but a bilaterally agreed framework formally acknowledged at the highest diplomatic level ([Anugrahanto, 2025](#)). This approach advances technical cooperation that allows joint resource management without requiring either party to alter their sovereignty claims. Indonesia's proposal envisions joint management of disputed maritime areas through clearly delineated administrative, technical, and operational functions shared between the two countries — what this study analytically characterizes as a shift from ad hoc cooperation toward more formalized joint stewardship arrangements, though it should be noted that this characterization reflects the author's interpretive reading of the policy trajectory rather than language drawn from official government documents.

This practical approach directly aligns with ([LeMière, 2014](#)) framework on cooperative maritime diplomacy, which identifies institutionalized technical cooperation as the most mature form of maritime diplomacy for managing tensions and fostering long-term relationships based on mutual interests. The JD proposal marks a significant shift from confidence-building measures to a comprehensive joint management mechanism with accountable structures. Indonesia's orientation toward establishing a shared management zone reflects functionalist arguments advanced by ([Bindenagel, 2016](#)), who contends that technical cooperation can serve as a confidence-building mechanism, reducing political tensions in disputed areas. However, Indonesia's approach extends beyond mere functionalism by embedding a consciousness of the colonial legacy within the cooperation framework, thereby transforming technical arrangements into decolonial practices.

The joint development proposal reflects a strategic logic whereby Indonesia maintains full sovereignty claims while acknowledging that functional cooperation can proceed before final delimitation. This logic is evident in Prabowo's statement that legal resolution and economic cooperation can advance simultaneously rather than sequentially ([Sekretariat Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2025](#)), reflecting a deliberate choice to decouple resource



management from sovereignty adjudication. This approach addresses the core dilemma of postcolonial states: asserting sovereign rights while avoiding conflict escalation that could undermine developmental priorities. By making joint development the central proposal in high-level bilateral dialogue, Indonesia actively shifts dispute logic from territorial contestation to shared stewardship. This directly responds to [Koldunova \(2018\)](#) critique of ASEAN Way stagnation, which often delays conflict resolution due to an excessive emphasis on consensus. Through this joint development framework, Indonesia introduces proactive engagement that respects non-intervention principles but ambitiously builds positive interdependence and institutional ties between nations.

Nevertheless, analysis reveals several potential implementation challenges that temper optimism about the prospects of joint development cooperation. First, domestic political sensitivities in both countries pose substantial obstacles. From a postcolonial standpoint, this challenge reflects the deeper legacy of colonial boundary-making that transformed territorial claims into markers of sovereign dignity, postcolonial states inherited a political culture in which territorial concession is read as a re-enactment of colonial subordination ([Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018](#)). Maximalist public positions on Ambalat are therefore analytically inseparable from this colonial memory structure, rendering technical negotiations vulnerable to domestic disruption not merely because of nationalist sentiment, but because sovereignty discourse carries decolonial weight that political elites cannot easily override ([Safira & Adam, 2022](#)). Even among Southeast Asia's most advanced precedents, including the Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Joint Development Zone framework, protracted negotiation periods preceded any functional agreement ([Aziz, 2018](#); [Jusoh et al., 2023](#)). Indonesia's own experience with the Zone of Cooperation in the Timor Sea (1989) and Malaysia-Thailand's Joint Authority in the Gulf of Thailand (1979–1990) further confirm that bilateral goodwill alone does not guarantee smooth institutional operationalization ([Benjarongkapan & Priaoprasit, 2025](#); [Rinardi et al., 2024](#)). Second, the division of administrative and technical functions within a joint development framework carries a specifically postcolonial risk: unequal technical capacity between the two parties' risks reproducing the epistemic hierarchies through which colonial governance once operated, where one party's knowledge and organizational infrastructure was treated as the authoritative standard ([Bhambra, 2014](#)). If one party's technical apparatus dominates the joint authority's management architecture, the framework may inadvertently replicate a logic of coloniality, undermining the decolonial aspiration the initiative is designed to embody ([Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018](#)). Third, unresolved security dimensions—including military patrol protocols, maritime law enforcement jurisdiction, and surveillance of third-party vessels—cannot be disentangled from postcolonial sovereignty anxieties. In societies where maritime territorial control was historically denied by colonial powers, security presence carries symbolic significance beyond operational function ([Rutazibwa, 2016](#)). Friction over patrol protocols is therefore foreseeable not merely as a coordination problem, but as a site where postcolonial identity remains actively contested.



From a postcolonial theoretical perspective, Indonesia's joint development push represents a hybrid practice ([Bhabha, 2004](#)) in which postcolonial states respond to international structures by absorbing modern technocratic logic while simultaneously reorienting its epistemic foundation. What distinguishes this from conventional middle power diplomacy or functionalist cooperation is not the institutional form — joint development zones exist within mainstream international law — but the knowledge claim underlying it: rather than treating the unresolved boundary as a legal deficiency requiring external adjudication, Indonesia reframes the absence of delimitation as a shared colonial wound that neither party has the authority to resolve unilaterally through inherited cartographic instruments ([Anghie, 2006](#)). This is an epistemically distinct move. Conventional middle power diplomacy operates within the Western juridical framework, accepting its categories of territorial sovereignty as neutral and universal, and seeking compromise within those categories. Indonesia's framing, by contrast, delegitimizes the inherited colonial boundary as the very starting point of negotiation—positioning both states as co-subjects whose authority to define maritime space derives not from colonial treaties but from their shared historical experience of having that space imposed upon them ([Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018](#)). In this sense, what is being decolonized is not merely the dispute mechanism but the underlying logic of how sovereignty is understood and performed: from an exclusionary, zero-sum claim derived from colonial boundary treaties to an inclusive, functionally cooperative assertion in which sovereignty is exercised collectively and relationally, grounded in postcolonial solidarity rather than inherited cartography ([Rutazibwa, 2016](#)). The epistemic break, therefore, lies precisely in the refusal to treat Western juridical frameworks as the only legitimate basis for territorial resolution—a refusal that middle power diplomacy, operating within those same frameworks, does not and cannot make.

The joint development framework thus functions not merely as a technical instrument but as a performative act signaling Southeast Asian capacity to build joint solution mechanisms without recourse to external arbitration—a process that postcolonial scholars argue tends to reproduce colonial-era epistemic hierarchies by privileging Western legal frameworks over regional self-determination ([Anghie, 2006](#)). Through this proposal, Indonesia operates as what ([Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998](#)) term a "norm entrepreneur," though it is important to clarify how the norms being promoted differ epistemically from Western models of middle power diplomacy. Unlike conventional middle power norm entrepreneurship — which typically works within established international legal frameworks to build multilateral consensus — Indonesia's approach challenges the foundational premise of those frameworks by refusing to treat colonial boundary treaties as the authoritative starting point for resolution. Instead, it proposes shared historical victimhood as an alternative normative foundation, which constitutes a genuinely postcolonial epistemic departure rather than simply a cooperative institutional strategy. The mechanism appears designed to allow both parties to claim a form of victory: Indonesia maintains its legal position



while demonstrating cooperative leadership, and Malaysia gains access to resource development opportunities while preserving its sovereignty claims. It should be noted that this characterization of Malaysia's strategic calculus is inferential, as this study does not draw on Malaysian primary sources to confirm how Kuala Lumpur internally frames the arrangement. Whether the productive ambiguity embedded in this framework reflects deliberate strategic design or emergent diplomatic pragmatism cannot be determined from the available evidence alone—what can be observed is that the consistent pattern of decoupling legal and economic tracks across multiple high-level dialogues produces an effect of diplomatic space in which technical progress occurs despite an unresolved political stalemate, regardless of whether this outcome was consciously intended.

### **The Institutional Dimension: Decolonizing ASEAN Norms**

The third finding indicates that Indonesia's Ambalat management experience is being discursively extended toward a broader regional framing, evident across multiple diplomatic contexts and institutional forums spanning the entirety of 2025. At the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, President Prabowo explicitly stated that "the legacy of colonialism... remains in the form of unclear territorial boundaries," applying this postcolonial framing to maritime disputes throughout the region, including the South China Sea and Ambalat ([Mawangi, 2025](#)).

This discursive positioning is complemented by Indonesia's active institutional engagement within ASEAN itself across multiple summits and ministerial meetings. At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting Retreat in Cebu on 29 January 2025, Foreign Minister Sugiono urged ASEAN member states to strengthen ASEAN centrality and supported the finalization of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea as a step toward a more stable and rules-based maritime order ([Sinaga, 2026](#); [Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2026](#)). At the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 26 May 2025, President Prabowo called for ASEAN to become "more adaptive and results-oriented," explicitly demanding that ASEAN Community Vision commitments become "a concrete and implementable roadmap, not just an aspirational document," while also calling for the strengthening of ASEAN's institutional capacity to respond more swiftly to external shocks ([Basyari, 2025](#)).

This institutional reform agenda directly responds to longstanding critiques of ASEAN Way stagnation — the tendency toward declaratory consensus without operational follow-through ([Koldunova, 2018](#)) — from within ASEAN's own plenary forum. During a bilateral meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on 29 July 2025, Prabowo further endorsed consultation, deliberation, and negotiation as the primary approach to border conflicts specifically, grounding this in the observation that ASEAN countries share "similar cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds" — a solidarity framing that directly parallels the *satu rumpun* postcolonial logic applied to the Ambalat dispute ([Basyari, 2025](#)).

Most significantly, at the retreat session of the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 26 October 2025, Prabowo addressed ASEAN leaders with a direct warning:

"The world is fragmented. Competition is intensifying, trust is fading, and the global order is losing balance. In such an environment, ASEAN must stay united. Unity and centrality are not mere slogans, without them, we risk being divided by greater powers." (Subianto, as cited in [Mawangi, 2025](#))

He further addressed maritime security directly by urging ASEAN to uphold the principles of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and accelerate the completion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea by 2026. This call reflects ASEAN's broader institutional commitment to conclude the CoC negotiations in accordance with international law while maintaining regional stability and confidence-building measures ([Octaviana, 2026](#); [BPMI Setpres, 2025](#)). At the same time, the emphasis on UNCLOS-based governance reinforces the rules-based maritime order logic that underpins Indonesia's approach to maritime disputes, including its proposal for cooperative development arrangements in areas such as Ambalat.

It is important, however, to maintain analytical precision. The available evidence supports the claim that Indonesia is actively projecting postcolonial solidarity framing and institutional reform advocacy across multiple ASEAN forums and bilateral engagements throughout 2025, and that this positioning is producing observable diplomatic recognition — but it does not yet demonstrate that these efforts have produced measurable shifts in ASEAN's formal normative architecture or conflict management frameworks. What can be analytically claimed is that Indonesia is positioning itself as a normative voice advocating for the incorporation of shared historical and cultural consciousness into regional security discourse — a positioning that, if sustained and institutionally operationalized, could constitute the early stage of norm entrepreneurship at the regional level ([Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998](#)). Whether this ambition translates into durable institutional change remains an open empirical question that exceeds the scope of the present study.

This discursive scaling carries significant analytical implications for regional order. First, by embedding a colonial historical dimension into regional maritime discourse, Indonesia implicitly challenges what [Bhambra \(2014\)](#) identifies as the tendency toward ahistorical framings of regional integration — specifically, the ahistorical understanding of the "ASEAN Way" that prioritizes contemporary stability without acknowledging the imperialist origins of many regional conflicts ([Koldunova, 2018](#); [Bindenagel, 2016](#)). This aligns with [Bhambra's \(2014\)](#) argument about connected histories, which emphasizes that inclusive regional integration must be grounded in the recognition of shared colonial experiences. Southeast Asian border conflicts cannot be fully comprehended without recognizing how 19th-century agreements, such as the Anglo-Dutch and Franco-British treaties, artificially

divided communities and resource ([Harefa et al., 2024](#); [Lukito & Saat, 2023](#)). By introducing this historical consciousness into forums that have conventionally bracketed such questions, Indonesia's initiative implicitly demands that ASEAN recognize how its principle of respecting existing borders (*uti possidetis juris*) simultaneously perpetuates colonial cartography, making such recognition a prerequisite for the genuine decolonization of regional governance. It should be noted, however, that no official Indonesian government document reviewed in this study explicitly invokes the principle of *uti possidetis juris* or directly names the ASEAN Way as ahistorical; the analytical connection between Indonesia's framing and these theoretical implications represents the author's interpretive reading rather than a stated government position.

Second, this effort reflects Indonesia's exercise of middle power diplomacy grounded in postcolonial identity rather than conventional material capabilities. Unlike middle powers that lead through economic capacity or military capability, Indonesia's approach — analytically characterized here as narrative authority — involves redefining the collective meaning of the region's shared historical experience as a basis for normative leadership. This represents an extension of what [Rijal \(2019\)](#) terms smart maritime diplomacy, moving beyond national branding toward regional discursive positioning, though whether this positioning will achieve durable normative influence remains, as established above, an open empirical question.

Substantial challenges nonetheless confront this agenda. Resistance may emerge from ASEAN members without direct colonial maritime boundary grievances, who could perceive the linking of contemporary disputes to colonial memory as destabilizing over-politicization. Malaysia itself, despite rhetorically accepting the "fellow inheritor" framing bilaterally, may resist Indonesia's use of Ambalat as a template for broader ASEAN reform if it is perceived as Indonesian hegemonic leadership disguised as decolonial solidarity — a perception that could undermine the bilateral trust essential for joint development implementation. Additionally, the non-intervention norm remains, as [Koldunova \(2018\)](#) emphasizes, extremely resistant to modification within ASEAN's institutional culture. It must be acknowledged, however, that these challenges are analytically projected rather than empirically documented in the present study's primary sources, and a fuller assessment would require systematic analysis of other ASEAN members' responses to Indonesia's normative positioning — an avenue that represents a productive direction for future research.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that Indonesia's maritime diplomacy in the Ambalat dispute under the Prabowo administration has shifted from a legalistic and security-oriented approach toward what is conceptualized as postcolonial maritime diplomacy. In this approach, shared colonial historical consciousness is strategically mobilized to reframe disputes and enable cooperative arrangements. This reorientation is reflected in three interconnected dimensions: narratively,

Indonesia positions Malaysia as a fellow inheritor of colonial boundaries, thereby externalizing the source of conflict; practically, it establishes a joint development framework that separates resource management from sovereignty claims; and institutionally, it extends this logic to the regional level by embedding postcolonial consciousness within ASEAN's maritime governance discourse.

The study contributes to International Relations by demonstrating that postcolonial identity can function as an active form of diplomatic agency rather than merely a source of grievance. By integrating postcolonial theory with cooperative maritime diplomacy, it offers a new analytical framework for understanding how identity reconstruction shapes diplomatic practice in sovereignty disputes. While the findings are conceptual and based on discourse analysis, they provide important insights into alternative modes of conflict management in Southeast Asia and open avenues for future research on the practical implementation and broader applicability of postcolonial maritime diplomacy.

## REFERENCES

- Acharya, A. (2009). *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*. Routledge. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=tM7y0zMMDy4C>
- Andělová, P. (2017). *Boundaries and Frontiers in Southeast Asia: Fences Have Made Fretful Neighbors* (pp. 21–45). Brill. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004312180\\_003](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004312180_003)
- Anghie, A. (2006). The Evolution of International Law: Colonial and Postcolonial Realities. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(5), 739–753. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4017775>
- Anugrahanto, N. C. (2025, June 27). *Portrait of Close Relations between Indonesia and Malaysia from the Closeness of Prabowo and Anwar*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-kunjungi-indonesia-pm-malaysia-anwar-ibrahim-dijemput-presiden-prabowo>
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2024). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader 3rd Edition*. Routledge.
- Aziz, M. F. (2018). Developing Joint Development Zone in Disputed Maritime Boundaries. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 15(4), 432–448. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol15.4.735>
- Basyari, I. (2025). *Indonesia Pushes ASEAN to be More Adaptive*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/en-indonesia-dorong-asean-lebih-adaptif>
- Benjarongkapan, K., & Priaoprasit, N. (2025). The Management of Maritime Boundary Dispute Between Thailand and Cambodia: The Considerations of International Law and Politics. *Nitiparitat Journal*, 5(3), 59–95. <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/NitiPari/article/view/287589>
- Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=p7quDTSmYRYC>
- Bhambra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies*, 17(2), 115–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2014.966414>

- Bindenagel, J. D. (2016). *Pacific Community for Peace and Governance: Towards a Framework for Peace and Security in the Pacific BT - Power Politics in Asia's Contested Waters: Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea* (E. Fels & T.-M. Vu (eds.); pp. 509–521). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26152-2\\_24](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26152-2_24)
- BPMI Setpres. (2025, October 26). *Presiden Prabowo: Persatuan dan Sentralitas ASEAN Kunci Stabilitas Kawasan*. Siaran Pers. <https://presidenri.go.id/siaran-pers/presiden-prabowo-persatuan-dan-sentralitas-asean-kunci-stabilitas-kawasan/>
- Bustami, R., & Maksum, A. (2022). The Domestic Politics and Indonesia's Tension with Malaysia on The Ambalat Case. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial; Volume 21 (2)*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jis.21.2.2022.98-125>  
<https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/ilmusos/article/view/49363>
- Carruthers, A. (2023). Specters of excess: Passing and policing in the Malay-speaking archipelago. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 33, 131–160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12398>
- Druce, S.C. & Baikoeni, E.Y. (2016). *Circumventing Conflict: The Indonesia–Malaysia Ambalat Block Dispute*. In: Oishi, M. (eds) *Contemporary Conflicts in Southeast Asia*. Asia in Transition, vol 3. Springer, Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0042-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0042-3_7)
- Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization*, 52(4), 887–917. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550789>
- Hadi, S. (2014). The Dispute of Ambalat In The Perspective of Indonesian Foreign Policy In The Post-New Order Era. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 12(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol12.1.589>
- Hakim, F. N., Mayasari., & Abidin, Z. (2025). Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum Vision and Regional Security in Indo-Pacific. *Papua Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 5(1), 50-64. DOI: 10.31957/pjdir.v5i1.4309
- Harefa, J., Akbar, M., Asto, A., & Ibrahim, M. (2024). Legacy of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty 1824: Tracing its Impacts on the Present Time Indonesia and Malaysia's Society and Legal Systems. *Neoclassical Legal Review: Journal of Law and Contemporary Issues*, 3, 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.32734/nlr.v3i1.15583>
- Hunter, M. (2025, September 8). *Indonesia's position on the Ambalat dispute: A study in Sovereignty, Diplomacy, and Resource Management – analysis*. Murray Hunter. <https://murrayhunter.substack.com/p/indonesias-position-on-the-ambalat>
- Jusoh, S., Abd Razak, M. F., & Mohd Yusof, A. R. (2023). Malaysia-Thailand Joint Development Agreement. *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 22(1), 167–176. <https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmad014>
- Kamil, I., & Ramadhan, A. (2025, August 15). *Prabowo: Kita Mau Ditabrakkan dengan Malaysia? Kita Sahabat, Satu Rumpun*. Kompas. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2025/08/15/11420931/prabowo-kita-mau-ditabrakkan-dengan-malaysia-kita-sahabat-satu-rumpun>

- Kementerian Luar Negeri RI. (2026, January 28). *Menlu Sugiono: ASEAN Harus Kuat dan Bersatu dalam Menavigasi Masa Depan Bersama*. Portal Kemlu.  
<https://kemlu.go.id/berita/berita/menlu-sugiono-asean-harus-kuat-dan-bersatu-dalam-menavigasi-masa-depan-bersama?type=publication>
- Koldunova, E. (2018). *Which "ASEAN Way" Forward?: Southeast Asian Perspectives on Peace and Institutions BT - The Palgrave Handbook of Global Approaches to Peace* (A. Kulnazarova & V. Popovski (eds.); pp. 347–366). Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78905-7\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78905-7_17)
- Le Mière, C. (2014). *Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Drivers and Challenges (1st ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203555590>
- Lukito, L. binti, & Saat, I. (2023). The Implications of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 on the Demarcation and Economy of Sebatik Island. *Melayu: Jurnal Antarabangsa Dunia Melayu*; 16(2). [https://doi.org/10.37052/Jm.16\(2\)No4](https://doi.org/10.37052/Jm.16(2)No4)  
<http://jurnal.dbp.my/index.php/Melayu/article/view/8708>
- Mawangi, G. T. (2025, April 12). *Prabowo ungkap strateginya kelola ketegangan di Laut China Selatan*. Antara News. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4766213/prabowo-ungkap-strateginya-kelola-ketegangan-di-laut-china-selatan>
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. (2018). *Epistemic Freedom in Africa Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. Routledge.
- Nuruzzaman, F. (2025). Blok Ambalat Antara Sengketa dan Peluang Kerja Sama Ekonomi. *JMBI UNSRAT: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis Dan Inovasi Universitas Sam Ratulangi*, 12(1), 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.35794/jmbi.v12i1.59736>
- Octaviana, S.F.(2026, January 30). *ASEAN aims to complete South China Sea CoC by 2026*. Antara News. <https://en.antaranews.com/news/402286/asean-aims-to-complete-south-china-sea-coc-by-2026>
- Rahayu, K. Y. (2025, August 7). *RI Berkomitmen Selesaikan Perbatasan Ambalat secara Damai*. Kompas. <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/ri-berkomitmen-selesaikan-perbatasan-ambalat-secara-damai>
- Rijal, N. K. (2019). Smart Maritime Diplomacy: Diplomasi Maritim Indonesia Menuju Poros Maritim Dunia. *Global Strategis*, 13(1), 63–78. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jgs.13.1.2019.63-78>
- Rinardi, H., Hasanah, M. A., & Sulistiyono, S. T. (2024). Indonesia-Australia Timor Gap Agreement: A Pseudo Political Victory or Territorial Contest Defeat. *Journal of Maritime Studies and National Integration*; Vol 7, No 1. <https://doi.org/10.14710/Jmsni.V7i1.22785>  
<https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/jmsni/article/view/22785/11074>
- Rutazibwa, O. U. (2016). From the Everyday to IR: In Defence of the Strategic Use of the R-word. *Postcolonial Studies*, 19(2), 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2016.1254016>
- Safira, M. & Adam, M. (2022, December 15). *Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea. Research Proposal*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.34189.76008>

- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.  
<https://books.google.co.id/books?id=dVpxAAAAMAAI>
- Sekretariat Presiden Republik Indonesia. (2025, June 27). *Presiden Prabowo dan PM Anwar sepakat tuntaskan isu perbatasan, dorong kolaborasi kawasan*. Siaran Pers.  
<https://presidenri.go.id/siaran-pers/presiden-prabowo-dan-pm-anwar-sepakat-tuntaskan-isu-perbatasan-dorong-kolaborasi-kawasan/>
- Setiawan, A. (2024). Indonesia's Maritime Diplomacy under Joko Widodo Administration: Advancing the Global Maritime Fulcrum Vision. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains*, 5.  
<https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v5i12.1519>
- Sinaga, T. M. (2026, January 19). *Masa Depan ASEAN Bergantung pada Stabilitas Kawasan*. Kompas.  
<https://www.kompas.id/artikel/masa-depan-asean-bergantung-pada-stabilitas-kawasan>
- Solomon, R. L. (1970). Boundary Concepts and Practices in Southeast Asia. *World Politics*, 23(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009628>
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Can the Subaltern Speak? BT - Marxism and Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Subianto, P. (2025, August 15). *Pidato kenegaraan Presiden RI pada sidang tahunan MPR RI, sidang bersama DPR–DPD RI* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G87hL-UcTPY>
- Supancana, I. (2015). Maritime Boundary Disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia in the Area of Ambalat Block: Some Optional Scenarios for Peaceful Settlement. *Journal of East Asia and International Law*, 8, 195. <https://doi.org/10.14330/jeail.2015.8.1.09>
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yadav, A. S. (2025). Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Prabowo: A Shift Toward Strategic Assertiveness. *Verity: Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional (International Relations Journal)*, 17(33), 15-30.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Muhammad Alfian Maulana is a lecturer in the Political Science Study Program, Udayana University. His research expertise spans International Relations, Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution, and Global Politics, with a strong emphasis on digital and maritime diplomacy. Maulana's work heavily focuses on contemporary geopolitical crises, offering in-depth analyses of the Russia-Ukraine war, Middle Eastern security dynamics, and United States foreign policy. He notably explores the evolution of modern warfare and the influence of non-state actors on global diplomacy. His scholarly pursuits are deeply intertwined with his focus on the intersection of politics, media, and technology.



**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

Maulana, M.A. (2026). Postcolonialism and Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy: Reinterpreting the Ambalat Dispute Toward Institutional Reform and Regional Solidarity in Southeast Asia. *Papua Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, 6(1), 68-92. DOI: 10.31957/pjdir.v6i1.5120