

Russia, the Islamic World, and the New World Order: Implications for Indonesia

Rizki Damayanti^{1*}, Hizra Marisa², Marsya Pramesthi Dayusaputra³

¹²³ Department of International Relations, Faculty of Philosophy and Civilization, Universitas Paramadina, Jakarta, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Date received: 7 August 2025 Revision date: 22 December 2025 Date published: 15 January 2026</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords <i>Russia;</i> <i>Islamic World;</i> <i>Indonesia;</i> <i>New World Order;</i> <i>Foreign Policy</i></p> <hr/> <p>Correspondence Email: rizki.damayanti@paramadina.ac.id</p> <hr/> <p>*Corresponding author</p>	<p>The emergence of a new world order is raising its involvement in the relationship between Russia and the Islamic world, which is also of significant relevance for Indonesia given its position as a bridge to Russia's broader pivot to the East. This research aims to analyze how Russia's growing ties with Islamic nations impact global power structures and influence Indonesia's foreign policy and strategic interests. Using Rosenau's foreign policy theory that conceptualizes state behavior as an adaptive response to changes in the external environment in order to seek survival, this study implies a qualitative approach to define Russia's geopolitical rationale. The analysis draws on primary and secondary sources including policy documents, official statements, scholarly articles, and interviews with representatives from the Russian Embassy in Indonesia and the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The findings reveal that Russia's growing engagement with the Islamic world forms part of broader strategy to counter Western domination and establish a multipolar world order through economic, military, and diplomatic initiatives. This has made Russia positioned itself as a central power broker across the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. Therefore, as a prominent Muslim-majority nation and a key ASEAN member, Russia's ongoing developments carry strategic implications for Indonesia. Russia's expanding role offers opportunities for Indonesia that goes along with Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy but simultaneously generating challenges by increasing external pressure on Indonesia's ability to maintain that posture. Consequently, Indonesia must actively navigate strategic and balanced foreign policy to enhance its diplomatic leverage, while maintaining regional stability and promote its national interest.</p>

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving global landscape, the interplay between major global powers and regional actors shapes international order in profound ways. One of the pivotal dynamics in today's geopolitical fields is Russia's increasing engagement with the Islamic world as it seeks to increase its influence and also counterbalance the Western domination (Pathan, 2025). President Vladimir Putin frequently invokes "shared moral values" and portrays Russia as a natural partner of the Islamic world in opposition to Western liberalism with strategy that goes beyond Middle East regions with large Muslim populations, which includes Southeast Asia (Pathan, 2025). As for that, Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, navigating these developments has become a central challenge in shaping its foreign policy. Moreover, Indonesia's prominent role within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) underscores its strategic importance for Russia's engagement with the Islamic world (Tsygankov, 2019).

Historically, Russia's relationship with the Islamic world have been shaped by a composite of cooperation, rivalry, and strategic maneuvering. The Islamic world refers to states and societies where Islam plays significant role in shaping social identity, political discourse, and even a state's foreign policy. These states are ramified across several region including the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and parts of Asia. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union build alliances with secular Arab nationalist regimes whilst confronting Islamic movements that viewed as threats to communist ideology (Trenin, 2016). Even so, the fall of the Soviet Union left Russia fragile, demographically weakened, and politically uncertain and leads to the post-Soviet era, where Russia has actively sought to rebuild and expand its relationships with Islamic countries particularly through energy collaboration, arms sales, and geopolitical alignment (most notably the Syrian Civil War) (Tsygankov, 2019). These foreign policy shifts seen as part of Russia's broader strategic aim to counter Western dominance in international order and promoting a multipolar world order by positioning itself as a consistent and values-driven partner for Islamic countries (Trenin, 2016).

With the increasing geopolitical competition, Russia has intensified its diplomatic engagement with the Islamic world particularly across the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia in recent years. These initiatives are viewed as components of Russia's pivot towards the East that reflects larger strategic reorientation in response to its deteriorating relations with the West following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent imposition of sanctions (Xue et al., 2024). As Russia seek to assert itself as an influential player in global politics, the partnerships with Islamic countries are seen as crucial for shaping both regional and global geopolitical outcomes (Roberts, 2017). Russia's posture appeals to Muslims who view Western powers as hypocritical, which proven by Russia's public condemnation of Qur'an burnings in Europe as an act against "freedom of expression" (Pathan, 2025)

The main issue explored in this study concerns on how Indonesia should navigate its foreign policy amid Russia's growing engagement with the Islamic world. Russia offers symbolic alternatives to Western alliances but with very tiny economic relief (Pathan, 2025). Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country and a key ASEAN member have to face the challenge of maintaining its non-aligned stance while adapting to evolving geopolitical competition. As Russia expands its influence in the Islamic world that supported by its strategic ambitions in Southeast Asia, raises critical questions concerning Indonesia's diplomatic positioning, economic interests, and security collaboration (Galeev & Semenov, 2024). Furthermore, Indonesia must consider how to capitalize on its unique identity as a Muslim-majority nation to cultivate beneficial relations between Russia and the broader Islamic world, particularly in areas such as counterterrorism, energy cooperation, and economic partnerships.

Indonesia's foreign policy has long been rooted in principles of peaceful coexistence, non-intervention, and active engagement in global diplomacy. Guided by its Free and Active (Bebas Aktif) doctrine, Indonesia aims to steer clear of the entanglements that often arise from great power rivalries dominating international relations (Setiawan & Tomsa, 2022). However, as the global balance of power shifts with Russia's growing influence in regions is critical to Indonesia's strategic interests. Wherein, Indonesia faces the need to reassess how the interactions engage with both Russia and the Islamic world.

The relationship between Russia, the Islamic world, and Indonesia is further complicated by Indonesia's leadership role in ASEAN. This organization has historically emphasized regional stability and economic integration over geopolitical confrontations (Martynova, 2022). Indonesia's position within ASEAN presents challenges but it also offers opportunities for navigating its

relationship with Russia. Indonesia must remain attentive to ASEAN's broader security concerns, particularly regarding China and the United States. However, Indonesia's identity as a Muslim-majority nation may confer unique diplomatic advantages in fostering relations with both Russia and Islamic countries (Mahaseth, Wong, & Shalika, 2022).

Indonesia's ties with Russia are also influenced by its overarching foreign policy objectives, particularly in energy, arms sales, and regional security. Over the past decade, bilateral trade has seen steady growth, with notable Russian investments in Indonesia's energy and infrastructure sectors (Mitrova and Yermakov, 2019). Additionally, Russia has emerged as a key arms supplier for Indonesia, reflecting efforts to diversify its defense partnerships beyond traditional Western sources (Ashidiqi, Dwi, Sasmita, & Gunawan, 2024). These economic and security ties introducing another layer of complexity to Indonesia's foreign policy, as the it seeks to balance its economic interests with its commitments to ASEAN and its aspiration to maintain a peaceful and stable regional environment.

Hence, this study aims to explore how Indonesia can effectively navigate the complex and evolving relationship between Russia and the Islamic world, and what strategic considerations it must address in shaping its foreign policy. Russia's expanding engagement with Islamic countries has altered regional and global political dynamics and creates new strategic considerations for states beyond the Middle East. By analyzing the key drivers and pattern of Russia's engagement, the study will provide insights into how these dynamics influence global geopolitical strategies and their implications for Indonesia. The study ultimately aims to assess the strategic choices Indonesia must consider in responding to these shifting geopolitical competition for its foreign policy.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine Russia's engagement with the Islamic world and its implications for Indonesia within the broader context of international relations. A qualitative method is employed due to their suitability to delve deeply into complex social phenomenon, including foreign policy interactions and evolving geopolitical dynamics (Creswell, 2003). By utilizing qualitative research, this study aims to uncover the nuanced perspectives and motivations underlying Russia's strategic engagement and their impact on regional global dynamics with Islamic countries, notably in relation to Indonesia's foreign policy considerations.

This research is based on multiple comprehensive data collection methods including an extensive review if relevant literature and semi-structured interviews with selected key informants. An extensive literature review is a systemics examination of relevant scholarly works that are relevant to the research topic. The purpose was to map the existing facts, establish the theoretical foundation, identify gaps in existing research, and also position the current study within ongoing academic debates (Creswell, 2003; Snyder, 2019). On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are qualitative method that combines predetermined guiding yet flexible questions to obtain in-depth insights from key actors. This method is effective for understanding meanings, interpretations, and motivations behind actor's behavior that usually suited for analyzing complex political and foreign policy phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In foreign policy research, this method is commonly used to capture elite insights that are not accessible through written sources alone (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002).

Firstly, an extensive literature review is conducted that encompasses scholarly articles, policy documents, and report from international organization. This comprehensive review will provide a foundational understanding of Russia's foreign policy strategies toward Islamic countries. Moreover, by examining book, journal articles, official statements, and strategic documents will enable the synthesizes of existing knowledge and the identification of key themes and trends in Russia's diplomatic and strategic engagement. This thorough review ensures that the study is anchored in established theories and provides a clear framework for evaluating Russia's geopolitical rationale.

To strengthen the literature-based analysis, this study also incorporates semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from both Russia and Indonesia. These interviews were conducted to obtain direct insights into Russia's foreign policy orientation and its engagement with the Islamic world. Interviews with the Russian Ambassador to Indonesia, Sergei Gennadievich Tolchenov; and the Political Counsellor at the Russian Embassy, Alexey Rykov provided crucial perspectives on Russia's foreign policy and its strategic interests in Muslim-majority regions such as Middle east and Central Asia emphasizing Russia's role to addressing global challenges which includes extremism, energy security, and economic diplomacy. In addition, an interview with Coordinator for Russia, Armenia, and Belarus at the Directorate of Europe II of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Indonesia; Enjay Diana perceived Indonesian viewpoint on Russia's foreign policy. This perspective sheds light on the significance of bilateral cooperation in area of multilateral diplomacy, trade, and defense policy within an evolving global order. With the inclusion perspectives from both Russia and Indonesian officials allows the study to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the issue and tighten the overall credibility of the analysis.

Data analysis will employ thematic analysis which allows the study to systematically identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns within qualitative data by identifying recurring meaning, ideas, or concepts to further understand a phenomenon deeply (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is applied to both the literature review and interview transcripts in order to focus and capture key themes that driven Russia's strategic interests in the Islamic world, its diplomatic maneuvers, and the implications for Indonesia's foreign policy and regional dynamics. Such an analytical approach ensures the reliability and validity of findings by providing a more structured and more methodical interpretation of qualitative data. To maintain methodological rigor, the study clearly explains the data collection process along with the criteria used to select interviewees and the thematic coding framework.

Foreign Policy as Theoretical Framework

According to James N. Rosenau in his book "World Politics: An Introduction" that was published in 1976, refers foreign policy as totality of state's orientations, action, and activities aimed at responding to and deriving advantages from its external environment in order to ensure national survival (Rosenau et al., 1976). Rosenau conceptualizes the state as an organism that seeks to survive by continuously adapting its policies to change in the international environment (Rosenau, 1974). Within this adaptive environment, there are several patterns that identifies as foreign policy adaptation namely acquiescent, intransigent, promotive, and preservative strategies which reflect varying degrees of responsiveness to external pressure and opportunities.

In international relations, the state remains as a central actor despite ongoing debates regarding the increasing role of non-state actors. This centrality underscores the close relationship between state and foreign policy as foreign policy serves as a primary means through which state

construct their international discourse and reinforce their position in the global politics. As stated by Caporaso et al. (1986), foreign policy focuses on governmental actions directed toward environments beyond a state's political jurisdiction which positioned it as a distinct yet integrative subfield of international relations that encompasses political, economic, and social dimensions (Caporaso et al., 1986)

Rosenau further elaborates foreign policy through three interrelated conceptual forms (Rosenau et al., 1976). First, foreign policy as a cluster of orientations refers to the values, perceptions, and attitudes that guide decision-makers in interpreting external developments. Second, foreign policy as a set of commitments and plans for action represents the concrete objectives, instruments, and strategies formulated to align national orientations with external conditions. Third, foreign policy as a form of behavior manifests in actual decisions and actions taken by the state in response to specific international events and contexts.

Rosenau theoretical framework is particularly relevant to the study as it provides a lens to further examines both Russia and Indonesia adapt to its foreign policy as a response to broader transformation of the global order. Within this framework, Russia's diplomatic, economic, and security initiatives can be understood as forms of adaptive behavior aimed at preserving influence and advancing strategic interests. Aside that, Indonesia's foreign policy also viewed as an adaptive process shaped by external geopolitical shifts. Accordingly, this study employs Rosenau's framework to assess how Indonesia recalibrates its foreign policy strategies shaped while navigating Russia's growing influence and responding to evolving dynamics in the international system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Russia's Strategic Engagement with the Islamic World

Russia has increasingly presented itself as a consistent and values-driven partner for Islamic countries at a time when trust in the Western is gradually fading (Pathan, 2025). This positioning is reflected in Russia's strategic engagement with the Islamic world that portray a complex and multifaceted endeavor that encompasses political, economic, military, and even cultural dimensions. This broad approach reflects Russia's ambition to expand its influence protect key economic interests. Over the past decade Russia's relations with major Islamic countries have deepened and diversified considerably showing both continuity in long-standing partnership and adjustment in as the foreign policy orientation (Malashenko, n.d.).

On the political front, Russia has aimed to assert itself as a crucial player in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict provides clear examples of its active participation through the support for the Assad regime led by President Bashar al Assad against various opposition factions and terrorist organizations. Russia deploys its military to carry out military intervention which began in late 2015, precisely on 30 September 2015. Russia's main motivation actually was to maintain its strategic interest in the region that includes the important Tartus military base on the Syrian coast (Karaganov & Suslov, 2018). This marked a turning point in Russia's regional policy in its Middle Eastern strategy that showcasing its readiness to use military power to defend its interest and allies (Trenin, 2016; Averre, 2024). By taking such decisive action, Russia has established itself as a significant power broker in the region directly challenging the dominance of the United States (US) and its allies (Karaganov & Suslov, 2018).

Whilst on the economic side, Russia has fortified its connections with several key Islamic countries through energy cooperation and trade. Its relationship with Iran is especially noteworthy, whereas both countries have collaborated closely in the energy sector. Russia is actively assisting Iran in developing its nuclear energy capabilities. This partnership has served both parties well and beneficial enough, as it helps Iran to counterbalance US sanctions while also provides Russia with a strategic ally in the region (Katz, 2018). Furthermore, Russian state-controlled energy companies such as Gazprom and Rosneft have entered into numerous agreements with Middle Eastern nations to explore and develop oil and gas fields. This thereby secures Russia's economic interest in the region in structural way (Kharchilava & Petriashvili, 2024).

As in military engagement, Russia has significantly increased its arms sales to the Islamic world and successfully becoming a major supplier of advanced weaponry to countries like Egypt, Algeria, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This enhances both geopolitical and economical influence that Russia had in the region. For instance, the sale of advanced missile defense systems like the S-400 to Turkey (a North Atlantic Treaty Organization/NATO member) caused considerable tensions within the alliance which serves Russia's strategic interests by driving a wedge between Turkey and its Western allies (Arduino & Shuja, 2021).

Culturally, Russia has capitalized on its historical ties with the Islamic world as a means of strengthening their soft power. The presence of a substantial Muslim population within Russia itself, particularly in regions like Chechnya and Tatarstan has facilitated cultural interaction that leads to cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections. Through state support for Islamic cultural and educational institutions both home and abroad Russian government has sought to cultivate an image of respect toward Islamic identity and traditions and reinforces its reputation as a friend to the Islamic world (Korshunova, 2023).

Moreover, Russia's engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE has proven significant to illustrate its pragmatic foreign policy approach. Russia and Saudi Arabia bilateral relation have discovered common ground in regulating global oil markets despite their history of political differences. The GCC countries has collaboration through the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries+ (OPEC+) agreement that also includes Russia alongside several OPEC members. OPEC+ has been vital for stabilizing oil prices and ensuring mutual economic benefits in the global oil realm (Kozhanov, 2021). This cooperation exemplifies a pragmatic approach in Russia's foreign policy where economic interests can transcend historical geopolitical rivalries.

In North Africa, Russia has also worked to reestablish its influence through a combination of diplomatic initiatives and military involvement. For instance, in Libya, Russia affirm their support for the Libyan National Army under General Khalifa Haftar with providing military assistance to shape the ongoing conflict's outcome. This involvement also aimed to secure Russia's strategic interests in the Mediterranean while limiting NATO's influence in the region. At the same time, Russia as well strengthened its closer ties with Algeria through arms sales and energy cooperation which further solidifying its foothold in this geopolitically significant area (Sour, 2024).

Russia's relationship with Turkey illustrates the layered and often contradictory nature of its regional engagements where bilateral relation coexists with intensifying competition. Although, the two countries have common ground with their foreign policy approach in the Syrian conflict nonetheless converged on practical initiatives such as the Astana peace process and major energy projects such as the TurkStream pipeline. This selective cooperation reflects Russia's capacity to

adapt with complex regional dynamics while also maintaining strategic alliances despite the ideological divergences they had (Lo, 2020).

Central Asia remains a vital focus for Russia's engagement with the Islamic world given the historical, cultural, and geographic ties that bind the region. Russia has preserved its influence through military alliances, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and economic initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). These institutions enable Russia to project power and safeguard its interests in a region that also attracts attention from China and Western states (Supyaldiyarov, Gupta, & Aliyeva, 2024). Moreover, Russia's soft power strategy in the Islamic world is evident in its participation in international organizations. As an observer state in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Russia promotes itself as a defender of Muslim interests that leads to facilitating engagement with a diverse range of Islamic countries and influencing key discussions on pivotal issues facing the Islamic community (Malashenko, 2022).

Another significant facet of Russia's policy within the Islamic world is its strategic engagement with Pakistan. Over the past decade, the bilateral relationship has evolved towards closer cooperation mainly in defense and counterterrorism. Joint military exercises and arms deals have bolstered these ties, reflecting Russia's intent to balance India's influence in the region and secure its own strategic interests in South Asia (Khan, 2023). Russia's diplomatic strategy also emphasizes the importance of balancing relations among rival factions within the Islamic world. For instance, Russia cultivated relationships with regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and Israel whilst it maintains strong ties with Iran. This balancing act enables Russia to position itself as a neutral arbiter that enhanced its influence across diverse power blocs in the Middle East (Abalian, 2020).

In the context of the Syrian conflict, Russia's role as a mediator has been paramount. By engaging with various stakeholders, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and regional powers like Turkey and Iran, Russia has established itself as an essential player in any potential resolution of the conflict. This mediation role not only boosts Russia's geopolitical standing but also aligns with its strategic interests in the region (Geukjian, 2020). Not much different, Russia's role in Afghanistan particularly in the wake of the US withdrawal, underscores its strategic interest in fostering stability in neighboring regions. Engaging with the Taliban and various Afghan factions, Russia seeks to prevent the spread of extremism and secure its southern borders. This approach illustrates Russia's pragmatic strategy of working with diverse political groups to achieve its objectives (Khan, 2023).

In recent years, Russia has also turned its attention to expanding its influence in sub-Saharan Africa where many countries have significant Muslim populations. Through military assistance, arms sales, and economic partnerships, Russia also aims to forge alliances and counter Western dominance in these areas. The involvement in nations such as Sudan and Mali demonstrate this broader engagement strategy (Mafany & Laila, 2023). Additionally, Russia has leveraged media and information warfare as tools in its relationship with the Islamic world. Outlets like Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik have launched Arabic-language platforms to shape public opinion in the Middle East and North Africa to promote narratives consistent with Russia's foreign policy goals while challenging Western perspectives and thereby enhancing its soft power (Mafany & Laila, 2023).

Russia's military-industrial complex has gained significantly from arms sales to the Islamic world. The exportation of advanced military technology not only provides economic advantages but also fortifies military partnerships. Countries like Egypt and Algeria have emerged as major buyers of Russian military equipment, reflecting the depth of these strategic relationships (Gasparyan, 2023).

In the counterterrorism arena, Russia seeks to establish itself as a crucial partner for Islamic nations. With sharing intelligence, conducting joint operations, and providing counterterrorism training, Russia hopes to develop strong security alliances that combat extremism potentially threatening its security while bolstering its influence in these partner nations (Omelicheva, 2019).

Moreover, Russia's approach to regional conflicts demonstrates a consistent strategic pattern characterized by pragmatic balancing and selective engagement rather than ideological alignment. The key finding of this study shows that Russia's relations with the Islamic world follow a "hedging–brokerage" pattern, in which Moscow simultaneously engages multiple and often competing actors to maximize diplomatic leverage and strategic flexibility. By maintaining working relations with rival parties in regional conflicts, Russia positions itself as an indispensable mediator and power broker, enabling it to influence conflict trajectories without committing to long-term political or military overextension.

This pattern reflects a broader conclusion that Russia's engagement with the Islamic world is instrumental and power-oriented, aimed at enhancing its global status rather than fostering normative leadership. Through pragmatic alliances, arms cooperation, energy diplomacy, and selective mediation in major regional crises, Russia consolidates its role as a revisionist power seeking to challenge Western dominance. Consequently, Russia's interaction with the Islamic world functions as a strategic mechanism to advance a multipolar world order, allowing Moscow to reclaim and sustain its position as a major global actor while exploiting geopolitical fragmentation within the international system.

Impact of Russia's Policies on the New World Order

Russia's strategic engagement with the Islamic world has notably influenced the evolving dynamics of the global order, reshaped the balance of power and affected international geopolitics. This engagement encompasses a wide array of interactions in political, economic, military, and cultural dimensions that collectively foster a multipolar world structure.

Politically, Russia's backing of regimes in the Islamic world as seen in the involvement on Syria conflicts, has significantly altered regional power dynamics. Its military intervention in Syria highlighted Russia's readiness to deploy force in defense of its interests and allies, directly countering Western influence in the region. This assertive stance has positioned Russia as a key power broker in Middle Eastern affairs, thereby transforming the regional order (Trenin, 2016). The implications of Russia's involvement extend to the geopolitical landscape, including the foreign policy strategies of Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation. Indonesia's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution through diplomacy is challenged by Russia's active participation in conflicts in the Middle East. This presents a dilemma for Indonesia, which traditionally advocates non-violent approaches to regional disputes, reflecting its foreign policy priorities centered on peace and cooperation (Diana, 2024).

Economically, Russia's energy partnerships with Islamic nations have further enhanced its influence. Collaboration within the OPEC+ framework, which includes prominent oil producers from the Islamic world, has allowed Russia to play an essential role in stabilizing global oil markets. This economic interdependence not only strengthens Russia's strategic relationships but also consolidates its position as a key player in global energy politics (Mitrova and Yermakov, 2019).

The military aspect of Russia's engagement is equally noteworthy. By supplying advanced weaponry to countries such as Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, Russia has fostered strategic dependencies that increase its geopolitical leverage. Notably, the sale of the S-400 missile system to Turkey, a NATO member, has complicated Turkey's relationships with Western allies and exemplifies Russia's capacity to sway alliances within the Islamic world (Gvosdev, 2018). Additionally, Russia's collaborations with significant Islamic nations may influence Indonesia's foreign relations across the broader Islamic community. Given its role in organizations like the OIC, Indonesia must deftly navigate its interactions with Russia to ensure that its policies remain aligned with its enduring commitment to non-alignment and peaceful diplomacy. The evolving alliances and Russia's proactive role in the Middle East create a complex geopolitical landscape for Indonesia, compelling it to balance its strategic interests while upholding its principles of diplomacy and multilateralism (Diana, 2024).

Russia's strategic partnerships with Iran and Turkey illustrate its significant influence on regional geopolitics. Despite their differing interests in Syria, Russia has adeptly maintained cooperation with both nations, leveraging their regional ambitions to its advantage. This skillful navigation of complex relationships enhances Russia's role as a mediator and power broker in the area (Cheterian, 2023).

In Central Asia, Russia's impact remains robust, supported by historical ties and strategic interests. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) serve as crucial instruments for Russia, helping it assert dominance and counterbalance both Chinese and Western influences in the region. These organizations play a critical role in securing Russia's southern borders and expanding its economic influence (Hussain, Mahrukh & Saleem, 2022).

Russia's renewed focus on Africa, particularly in countries with significant Muslim populations, underscores its broader strategic ambitions. Through military cooperation, arms sales, and infrastructure projects, Russia seeks to establish itself as a major player on the continent, expanding its influence in a region increasingly contested by global powers (Mafany & Laila, 2023). Additionally, Russia leverages its historical connections with the Islamic world to enhance its cultural and religious engagement. By supporting various Islamic cultural and educational initiatives both at home and abroad, Russia fosters goodwill and bolsters its soft power, cultivating a positive image among Muslim-majority countries.

Furthermore, Russia's participation in international organizations, such as its observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), extends its influence significantly. This involvement enables Russia to interact with a broad array of Islamic nations and promote its interests on a global stage, positioning itself as a defender of Muslim causes and a key player in the global Islamic community (Krickovic & Pellicciari, 2021).

The strategic use of media and information warfare has also reshaped the new world order. Russian media outlets, such as RT and Sputnik, with their Arabic-language services, aim to sway public opinion in the Islamic world. By promoting narratives that resonate with Russian interests and countering Western viewpoints, these platforms bolster Russia's soft power and strategic reach (Henderson & Mehdi, 2017).

Moreover, Russia's involvement in counterterrorism initiatives with Islamic nations is a vital facet of its strategic framework. By sharing intelligence, conducting joint military exercises, and providing counterterrorism training, Russia fosters strong security partnerships that contribute to

regional stability, while also addressing extremism that could threaten its own security. The relationship between Russia and Saudi Arabia, especially in the context of the OPEC+ agreement, exemplifies the economic interdependence and strategic cooperation that characterize the evolving global landscape. This partnership holds significant implications for global energy markets and geopolitical alliances, highlighting the strategic importance of energy diplomacy (Mitrova and Yermakov, 2019).

Russia's involvement in Afghanistan, especially after the US withdrawal, highlights its strategic interests in the region. By engaging with various Afghan factions, including the Taliban, Russia aims to thwart the spread of extremism and solidify its influence in Central Asia. This pragmatic stance is a part of Russia's broader strategy to stabilize its neighboring regions and extend its power beyond its borders. In addition, the relationship between Russia and Pakistan has evolved, with both nations moving towards closer cooperation in defense and counterterrorism efforts. This partnership not only helps Russia balance the influence of India in South Asia but also secures its own strategic interests in the area (Khan, 2023).

In North Africa, Russia's involvement in Libya and its growing ties with Algeria illustrate its ambition to reassert its presence on the continent. By supporting General Khalifa Haftar in Libya and deepening military and energy cooperation with Algeria, Russia is strategically influencing outcomes in this vital region (Sour, 2024).

The strategic implications of Russia's engagement with the Islamic world extend to its interactions with Western powers. By positioning itself as a key ally to several Islamic nations, Russia effectively challenges Western dominance and advocates for a multipolar world order. This strategic alignment not only enhances Russia's global influence but also complicates the objectives of Western foreign policy. Moreover, Russia's strategic use of arms sales to Islamic countries fortifies its economic ties while bolstering its geopolitical sway. These arms deals create dependencies and alliances that allow Russia to secure its interests and shift regional power dynamics (Baran, 2024).

The partnership between Russia and China, particularly in the context of their engagement with the Islamic world, marks a significant development in the emerging global landscape. The collaboration that characterized by economic, military, and political cooperation poses a challenge to Western dominance and fosters a multipolar world (Lo, 2020). Russia's emphasis on state sovereignty and national interests resonates with many Islamic nations, offering an alternative to the Western model of governance. This alignment appeals to countries in the Islamic world that seek to assert their independence and sovereignty.

The multifaceted impact of Russia's strategic engagement with the Islamic world on the new world order is evident through its efforts to build alliances, leverage economic and military cooperation, and promote cultural and religious ties. These actions enhance Russia's global influence and challenge existing power structures, reflecting its broader strategy to position itself as a major global player and advocate for a multipolar system (Trenin, 2016). In conclusion, Russia's strategic engagement with the Islamic world significantly shapes the emerging new world order. Through a comprehensive approach encompassing political, economic, military, and cultural interactions, Russia challenges Western hegemony and promotes a multipolar global system. These initiatives underscore Russia's ambition to re-establish itself as a major global power and to influence the trajectory of international relations in the 21st century.

Relevance and Implications for Indonesia's Foreign Policy

Russia's strategic engagement with the Islamic world carries significant implications for Indonesia's foreign policy given its status as the largest Muslim-majority nation and a vital player in Southeast Asian politics. Understanding these dynamics is essential for Indonesia's diplomatic strategies and its overarching geopolitical goals. Historically, Russia has navigated a complex relationship with the Islamic world alternating between conflict and cooperation. In the post-Soviet era, this relationship has transformed with Russia actively seeking to strengthen its ties with Muslim countries for both strategic and economic reasons (Rykov, 2024).

A key aspect of Russia's enduring connection with Indonesia can be traced back to the Soviet support that helped secure Indonesia's independence and maintain its territorial integrity. The impact of this historical assistance is evident in infrastructure projects such as the Gelora Bung Karno (GBK) Stadium and the highways linking Samarinda and Balikpapan which now stand as symbols of bilateral cooperation (Tolchenov, 2024).

Russia's engagement with the Islamic world is motivated by several geopolitical objectives, including countering Western influence, securing energy partnerships, and combating terrorism. These aims are in line with Russia's broader foreign policy strategy to assert its presence on the global stage (Gvosdev, 2018). Energy security plays a critical role in Russia's relationships with numerous Islamic nations, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. State-owned enterprises in Russia have entered into lucrative oil and gas agreements with countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, significantly affecting global energy markets (Henderson and Mehdi, 2017). Additionally, the resumption of direct flights between Moscow and Denpasar in 2023 and the growing bilateral trade, which surpassed \$4 billion that same year, highlight the economic potential of Russia-Indonesia relations, thriving even amid geopolitical tensions. Indonesia's increased cooperation with Russia in defense and cybersecurity is seen as mutually beneficial and is further reinforced by preparations for the 13th meeting of the Russian-Indonesian Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation (Tolchenov, 2024).

Moreover, Russia has positioned itself as a key player in global counterterrorism efforts, particularly by collaborating with countries facing Islamist insurgencies. This involvement includes intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and various forms of security cooperation. A notable example of Russia's strategic engagement in the Islamic world is its military intervention in Syria, which has been framed as a fight against terrorism and a means to maintain regional stability. This narrative resonates with other Muslim-majority countries confronting similar challenges (Notte, 2016).

Indonesia faces the complex task of carefully navigating its foreign policy in light of Russia's growing presence in the Islamic world. Committed to a non-aligned stance and a pivotal role in ASEAN, Indonesia must adopt a balanced approach that carefully weighs its economic interests alongside its ideological values (Menchik and Trost, 2018). The nation's decision not to participate in Western sanctions against Russia, particularly during the Special Military Operation, highlights Indonesia's dedication to its "free and active" foreign policy, which seeks to maintain equal distance from major world powers while prioritizing national interests (Tolchenov, 2024).

This strategy may present Indonesia with significant economic opportunities, especially in critical sectors such as energy and defense. Nonetheless, it is essential for Indonesia to be cautious about becoming overly dependent on Russian technology and markets. While the potential for enhanced economic ties with Russia is attractive, Indonesia must simultaneously contend with the broader geopolitical challenges presented by Western sanctions and economic pressures. This

intricate balancing act enables Indonesia to explore collaborative ventures in technology, energy, and halal industries, although it also comes with the risk of entangling itself in economic relationships that may contradict global sanction frameworks (Diana, 2024).

Indonesia's foreign policy is marked by its efforts to balance relationships with major powers, including the United States, China, and Russia. The latter's engagement with the Islamic world adds further complexity to Indonesia's diplomatic landscape (Setiawan and Tomsa, 2022). As a prominent member of ASEAN, Indonesia plays a vital role in shaping the bloc's collective response to external influences, particularly regarding Russia's strategic moves in the region. Indonesia's presidency of the G20 in 2022 and its chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023 exemplify its ability to uphold neutrality while supporting both global and regional initiatives, despite external pressures to isolate Russia (Tolchenov, 2024).

Russia's deployment of soft power in the Islamic world through cultural diplomacy and media outreach poses challenges for Indonesia's own public diplomacy efforts. In response, Indonesia must bolster its soft power initiatives to counteract Russia's influence effectively. The increasing number of Indonesian students studying in Russia, with 250 government scholarships allocated for 2024-2025, underscores the significance of educational exchanges in fortifying bilateral relations and paving the way for future collaboration in diverse areas, including halal products and high-tech industries (Tolchenov, 2024). However, Russia's alliances with authoritarian regimes in the Islamic world raise serious human rights and governance concerns. As a democratic nation, Indonesia must navigate these issues with care to preserve its international reputation and uphold its domestic values.

There are also opportunities for Indonesia to foster defense and security cooperation with Russia, particularly in fields like counterterrorism and maritime security. Nevertheless, it is crucial for these partnerships to be managed thoughtfully to avoid alienating other vital allies. Furthermore, the dynamics of Russia's engagement with the Islamic world may have domestic implications for Indonesia's Muslim communities, necessitating that Indonesia stay vigilant about any potential ideological shifts stemming from these interactions (Ashidiqi et al., 2024).

Indonesia's role as a mediator in regional conflicts could be shaped by Russia's activities within the Islamic world. To promote peace and stability while addressing Russia's interests, Indonesia must effectively utilize its diplomatic skills. Indonesia's involvement in global Islamic organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), may also be influenced by Russia's strategic interactions. It's crucial for Indonesia to ensure that its perspectives are represented in these forums to safeguard not only its own interests but also those of the wider Muslim community.

There are ample opportunities for Indonesia to enhance educational and cultural exchanges with Russia and other Islamic nations. Such initiatives have the potential to foster mutual understanding and develop long-lasting partnerships (Diana, 2024). Additionally, collaboration in technology and science, particularly in sectors like energy, space, and agriculture, could yield significant benefits for Indonesia. Indonesia must prioritize the strengthening of these partnerships while ensuring they align with its broader development objectives.

The upcoming Free Trade Agreement between Indonesia and the Eurasian Economic Union is on the brink of completion and holds promise for enhancing market access and deepening economic ties. This agreement will benefit Indonesia's expanding consumer base and various industries (Tolchenov, 2024). However, amidst these promising developments, Indonesia faces the challenge of not becoming overly dependent on Russia, especially given the unpredictability of geopolitical

relations and potential international sanctions that could disrupt economic connections. While there are considerable opportunities in technology and defense collaboration, Indonesia must tread carefully to ensure that its growing relationship with Russia does not conflict with its wider foreign policy aims, particularly its commitments to ASEAN solidarity and non-alignment (Diana, 2024).

Moreover, environmental and climate change cooperation presents another viable avenue for Indonesia and Russia to explore. Both nations grapple with significant environmental issues and could significantly benefit from shared knowledge and resources (Martynova, 2022). The geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West, including economic sanctions, create challenges for Indonesia, which must adeptly navigate these complexities to mitigate any negative impacts on its economy and international relationships. Looking forward, Indonesia must develop a strategic vision that considers the long-term implications of Russia's engagement with the Islamic world. This vision should prioritize national interests, regional stability, and global cooperation.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Russia's engagement with the Islamic world through the lens of Foreign Policy Analysis, emphasizing how state interests, strategic calculations, and external constraints shape Moscow's behavior in the emerging multipolar order. The findings demonstrate that Russia's relations with Muslim-majority countries are driven less by ideological affinity and more by pragmatic foreign policy objectives, particularly balancing against Western influence, securing economic and energy interests, and expanding strategic leverage in key regions. This pattern confirms that Russia employs a pragmatic and interest-based foreign policy, positioning itself as a flexible power broker rather than a normative leader in the Islamic world. From Indonesia's perspective, Russia's engagement with the Islamic world presents both strategic opportunities and structural constraints. As the largest Muslim-majority country and a leading ASEAN member, Indonesia's foreign policy response reflects its long-standing *bebas aktif* doctrine, which prioritizes strategic autonomy and diplomatic flexibility. The analysis suggests that Indonesia can selectively engage Russia in areas such as energy, defense, trade, and multilateral diplomacy while avoiding over-dependence and preserving balanced relations with Western and regional partners. This confirms that Indonesia's foreign policy is shaped by calculations of national interest, systemic pressures, and regional leadership responsibilities, consistent with Foreign Policy Analysis assumptions. Overall, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that Russia-Islamic world relations are best understood as a form of strategic pragmatism within a multipolar system, and that Indonesia's response is not reactive but strategically calibrated. Indonesia's ability to navigate Russia's growing role in the Islamic world will depend on maintaining policy flexibility, reinforcing ASEAN centrality, and leveraging its identity as a moderate Muslim-majority democracy to safeguard national and regional stability in an increasingly competitive global order.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was conducted with the support of a research grant under the Research Grant Program of the Institute for Research and Community Service (*Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat* – LPPM), Universitas Paramadina. We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Russian Ambassador to Indonesia, Sergei Gennadievich Tolchenov, and the Political Counsellor at the Russian Embassy, Alexey Rykov, for their invaluable insights into Russia's foreign policy and strategic interests in Islamic-majority regions such as the Middle East and Central Asia. Furthermore, we are especially grateful to Enjay Diana, the Coordinator for Russia, Armenia, and Belarus at the

Directorate of Europe II, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, for providing crucial insights into Indonesia's perspective on its relations with Russia and the broader Islamic world.

REFERENCES

- Abalian, A. I. (2020). Middle Eastern policy of the Russian Federation in the post-soviet period: Dynamics of development. *Political Expertise: POLITEX*, 16(2), 263–281. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu23.2020.205>
- Aberbach, J. D., & Rockman, B. A. (2002). Conducting and coding elite interviews. *Political Science and Politics*, 35(4), 673–676.
- Arduino, A., & Shuja, A. (2021). Russia's scalable soft power: Leveraging defense diplomacy through the transfer of S-400 Triumph. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 37(4), 435–452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2021.1995963>
- Ashidiqi, M. M., Dwi, R., Sasmita, A. W., & Gunawan, W. (2024). Defense policy: A look at bilateral cooperation. *JIP (Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan): Kajian Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Politik Daerah*, 9(2), 104–117. <https://doi.org/10.24905/jip.9.2.2024.104-117>
- Averre, D. (2024). *Russian strategy in the Middle East and North Africa*. Manchester University Press.
- Baran, M. (2024). Russia's recent Middle East engagements: Hitting multiple birds with a single stone. *Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 22(1), 138–153. <https://doi.org/10.11611/yea.1387519>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Caporaso, J. (1986). *The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy*. U.S. Department of Education.
- Cheterian, V. (2023). Friend and foe: Russia–Turkey relations before and after the war in Ukraine. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 34(7), 1271–1294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2023.2185443>
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage.
- Diana, E. (2024, October 22). Interview with the Coordinator for Russia, Armenia, and Belarus at the Directorate of Europe II, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.
- Galeev, I., & Semenov, K. (2024, February 1). A Pivot to the East and the Islamic Dimension of Russia's Foreign Policy. Russian Council.
- Gasparyan, A. (2023). Some aspects of the Algerian-Russian military cooperation: The features and prospects. *Contemporary Eurasia*, 12(1), 51–63.
- Geukjian, O. (2020). The geopolitics of the Russian, Iranian and Turkish involvement in the Syrian Civil War. *The Maghreb Review*, 45(3), 556–581. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tmr.2020.0018>
- Gvosdev, N. K. (2018). *Russian foreign policy: Interests, vectors, and sectors*. CQ Press.
- Henderson, J., & Mehdi, A. (2017). Russia's Middle East energy diplomacy. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-06-20/russias-middle-east-energy-diplomacy>
- Hussain, M., Mahrukh, H., & Saleem, M. (2022). *Study of Russian security activities in Central Asia*.

- under Collective Security Treaty Organization. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 186–193. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022\(3-III\)19](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-III)19)
- Karaganov, S., Suslov, D. (2018, October 4). A new world order: A view from Russia. *Russia in Global Affairs*.
- Katz, M. N. (2018). Russia and the Middle East: Balancing New Alliances in Shifting Sands. *Middle East Policy*, 25(2), 26-47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12341>
- Khan, M. N. (2023). Pakistan and Russia's convergence of interests in the emerging geopolitical environment. *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses*, 8(2), 27-52.
- Kharchilava, L., & Petriashvili, K. (2024). Energy strategy of Russia and the Persian Gulf states. *European Journal of Economics and Management*, 10(2), 5–8. <https://doi.org/10.46340/eujem.2024.10.2.1>
- Korshunova, O. (2023). Russia and the Muslim World: To the Problem of Studying the Cultural and Integrative Potential of the Regions (On the Example of the Volga Region). Kazan: Kazan Federal University Press.
- Kozhanov, N. (2021). Russia-GCC economic relations: When quality matters more than quantity. *Insight Turkey*, 23(1), 117–138.
- Krickovic, A., & Pellicciari, I. (2021). From “Greater Europe” to “Greater Eurasia”: Status concerns and the evolution of Russia's approach to alignment and regional integration. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 12(1), 86–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1879366521998808>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage
- Lo, B. (2020). *Axis of convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the new geopolitics*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Mafany, C. N., & Laila, A. (2023). Soft power diplomacy of Russia's encroachment in Africa: Stakes and implications. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(11), 1153–1175.
- Mahaseth, H., Wong, N. W. M., & Shalika. (2022). Understanding the intricacies between Southeast Asia and Russia. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 16(2), 10–22. <https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2022/v16i230280>
- Malashenko, A. (2022). Islamic vector in Russian foreign policy. *World Economy and International Relations*, 66(9), 64–71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2022-66-9-64-71>
- Malashenko, A. (n.d.). *The Dynamics of Russian Islam*. Carneige Moscow Center.
- Martynova, E. (2022). Russian-Indonesian relations through the ASEAN context: On the way to strategic partnership. *Asia and Africa Today*, 2022(7), 60–65
- Menchik, J., & Trost, K. (2018). A ‘tolerant’ Indonesia? Indonesian Muslims in comparative perspective. In R. W. Hefner (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of contemporary Indonesia* (pp. 390–405). London & New York: Routledge.
- Mitrova, T., & Yermakov, V. (2019). Russia's energy strategy-2035: Struggling to remain relevant. *Energy Policy*, 128, 676-685.
- Notte, H. (2016). Russia in Chechnya and Syria: Pursuit of strategic goals. *Middle East Policy*, 23(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12174>
- Omelicheva, M. Y. (2019). Russia's regional and global counterterrorism strategies: How Moscow's vision of the new global order affects its approach to terrorism. In R. E. Kanet (Ed.),

Routledge Handbook of Russian Security (pp. 266–276). Routledge

- Pathan, A. (2025). Russia's pivot to Muslim World: Shared values or cold strategy?. Muslim Network TV.
- Roberts, K. (2017). Understanding Putin: The politics of identity and geopolitics in Russian foreign policy discourse. *International Journal*, 72(1), 28–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702017692609>
- Rosenau, J. (1974). *Comparing Foreign Policies: Theories, Findings, and Methods*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961620>
- Rosenau, J., Thompson, K., Boyd, G. (1976). *World Politics: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Rykov, A. (2024, October 1). Interview with the Political Counsellor at the Russian Embassy.
- Setiawan, K. M. P., & Tomsa, D. (2022). *Politics in contemporary Indonesia: Institutional change, policy challenges, and democratic decline*. Routledge.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339.
- Sour, L. (2024). Algeria–Russia relations: Strategic partnership in the age of geopolitics. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 24(2), 204–215. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-2-204-215>
- Supyaldiyarov, I., Gupta, R., & Aliyeva, S. (2024). Beyond borders and bazaars: China and Russia's contest for hearts and minds in Central Asia. *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, 94(2), 52–70. <https://doi.org/10.52536/3006-807X.2024-2.04>
- Tolchenov, S. G. (2024, October 1). Interview with the Russian Ambassador to Indonesia.
- Trenin, D. (2016). *What is Russia up to in the Middle East?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tsygankov, A. P. (2019). *Russia and America: The asymmetric rivalry*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Xue, F., Awah, J. A., Achonwa, E. C., & Ngoye, S. T. (2024). The turn and development of Russian foreign policy towards Africa in the context of US-European sanctions, 2014–2024. *International Relations*, (4), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.7256/2454-0641.2024.4.72024>

Copyright holder:

Rizki Damayanti (2026)

First publication right:

[Andalas Journal of International Studies](#)

This article is licensed under:

