



## **Pivot to Africa: Uncovering Indonesia's Economic Diplomacy in Africa Region**

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**Abstract.** The South African region with its large population is an attraction for Indonesia to be used as an alternative (non-traditional) market share. Indonesia's economic diplomacy was then directed to the African Region. This research aims to analyze the implementation of Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African region, especially in Egypt and South Africa, in order to expand economic cooperation and increase Indonesia's influence at the global level. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. This research uses data collection techniques through secondary data (literature studies) obtained from journal articles, books, media and so on. This article uses the theory or concept of economic diplomacy. The results of the study show that Indonesia's proactive economic diplomacy efforts in the African region, especially Egypt and South Africa, have an impact on Indonesia's economy. Economic diplomacy in the African region is carried out not only bilaterally, but also multilaterally, for example the Indonesia-Africa Forum. Not only does it have an impact on the economy, it is also political, such as increasing Indonesia's bargaining power or influence in the African region and in the international world.

**Keywords:** Economic Diplomacy, Indonesia, Africa Region, Egypt, South Africa

### **Introduction**

The increase in the flow of globalization is the initial capital to encourage changes in the world order. This is inseparable from the presence of the concept of free trade which opens up opportunities for the country's trade commodities to increase. At the same time, it encourages the expansion of market share that can be done by a country to improve the country's economy. In the context of expanding market share, the African market is considered to have enormous potential as Indonesia's alternative export destination, especially for the inaugural export market of national manufactured products. (Wisnubroto, 2023). On the other hand, Indonesia must look for non-traditional export markets for Indonesian export products. One of the potential non-traditional export markets for Indonesia is the African Continent (Rasbin, 2024).

Indonesia's export trade balance to the African region shows an increasing trend, where in 2016 the average growth of the total value of Indonesia's exports to Africa had a positive or largest value of 5.886% (Amalina, 2018). Data in 2024 released by Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that Indonesia's exports to Africa have experienced stable growth with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of around 9.47% over the past five years. The five main destinations for Indonesia's exports to Africa include Egypt (37%), Cameroon (7.3%), Djibouti (7%), South Africa (6.1%), and Nigeria (5.5%). Indonesia's five largest export commodities to Africa include vegetable and animal oils, paper and paper products, soap and cleaning agents, motor vehicles and their components, and electrical equipment (Wibowo, 2024).

The African region is one of the continents with countries with high economic growth. At least the average economic growth of the region reaches an average growth of 6% (Syadullah, N.d.). According to other sources, the African market has a total trade value of 3.4 trillion United States dollars (bisnis.com, 2021). In addition, the African region has abundant natural resources. Starting from oil, natural gas, minerals, and forests, even Africa has most of the world's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable natural resources (UNEP, N.d.).

Although the purchasing power of the African market is still far below the traditional export market, Africa is very promising in terms of market size growth, trade competition, and trade barriers (Wisnubroto, 2023). The market share in the African region is still quite large and open (not yet saturated), and the number of players is still very small, so that the African market is still very promising for Indonesian exports (Tabloiddiplomasi.org, 2013). The sizable market share of the African region is seen in the large number of populations on the African continent. World Bank data shows that the total population on the African continent will reach 1.74 billion in 2023. This population is expected to increase to 2.5 billion or 2.5% of the world's total population by 2050 (Sarwindaningrum & Widi, 2024).

Other data from the United Nations estimates that Africa's population could reach 2.49 billion by 2050 or about 26 percent of the world's total population and 4.28 billion by 2100 or about 39 percent of the world's total population. This means that Indonesia has the strategic potential to strengthen diplomatic relations, establish economic, trade and investment cooperation with African countries (Wisnubroto, 2023). The large population of the African continent is a potential market for Indonesian products. In addition, domestic political conditions in the African region have also become more stable and have democratically elected leaders, have broader insights and choose to strengthen the economy rather than thinking about inter-ethnic conflicts that will harm their own country (Syadullah, N.d.).

These opportunities were quickly read by Indonesia. Indonesia wants to seize every opportunity from the dynamics of the African region by synergizing the activity programs of both parties. In this context, Ambassador Salman Al Farisi explained that the cooperation carried out by the Indonesian government with the African Union must be carried out continuously so that it will produce a good impact by both parties. (Tabloiddiplomasi.org, 2013)

This can be seen in the Indonesian government's statement that Indonesia targets to penetrate more widely in the African market as an export destination in 2023 and beyond. The Indonesian government believes that there are three potential market areas to be targeted, namely South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. For the Indonesian government, this is an anticipatory step where Indonesia's traditional target market in Western countries begins to weaken. So that the Indonesian government will develop the potential of non-traditional markets by making tariff-free agreements ("toll roads") so that there are no obstacles while making it easier for entrepreneurs to carry out their trade activities (cnnindonesia.com, 2023).

This article will discuss the various efforts made by Indonesia to increase its trade activities in several countries in the African region. This article argues that Indonesia seeks to expand its trade market share to the African Region through various economic diplomacy efforts. These efforts are carried out both bilaterally and multilaterally and maximize actors to ensure that economic diplomacy runs well. The African region has a very wide and promising market share for Indonesia, especially the actors that play in economic activities in the African region are still relatively few. Of course, this is based on the national interest of Indonesia itself.

### **Research Methods**

Several previous studies have examined Indonesia's trade to several countries in the African Region. Research conducted by Amalina et al. (2018) explains that in the period 2011 – 2016, potential African countries as Indonesia's export destination countries are South Africa and Egypt. The study uses the RCA (Revealed Comparative Advantage), EPD (Export Product Dynamic), and Intra Industry Trade (IIT) methods to identify export value and share, determine the performance and integration of trade between Indonesia and potential African countries. Other research shows that the implementation of Indonesia's economic activities to the African region to achieve Indonesia's economic interests, mainly is to increase Indonesia's exports which will ultimately be able to improve Indonesia's welfare. This is done in various ways, ranging from public communication to financing and so on (Delanova, 2021).

Other research emphasizes the use of international economic regimes and world trade forums to serve as an umbrella for economic cooperation for Indonesia and South

Africa. The cooperation applies WTO principles as a step in determining export and import policies (Wulaningrum, 2015). Other research has discussed the increase in trade activity in South Africa in 2015-2019 by reducing tariffs through the establishment of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs), conducting bilateral consultations between Indonesia and South Africa, conducting business visits to several entrepreneurs in South Africa, and protecting Indonesian products from antidumping and safeguards (Febrianti & Suryadipura, 2022). Another study explains that there is a projected volume and value of Indonesia's non-oil and gas exports and imports to South Africa to have increased from 2018 - 2027. The largest increase is projected to occur in the value of non-oil and gas imports at 37% and the lowest increase at 21.4%. The projection uses the Structural Time-Series Model (STSM) (Jati & Salam, 2018). The novelty of this study is to analyze contemporary economic diplomacy activities in various countries in the African Region. The impact of economic diplomacy, both economically and politically, is an interesting discussion offered in this study. That is not only the economic impact for Indonesia, but with the expansion of market share to the African Region, it indirectly increases Indonesia's influence or power in the African Region.

This article uses the concept of economic diplomacy. There are various forms of diplomacy, one of which is economic diplomacy. Piere-Bruno Ruffini (2016) argues that economic diplomacy refers to the methods and processes used by countries to utilize cross-border economic activities to achieve their national interests. Economic diplomacy bridges the relationship between the diplomatic sphere, representing countries on the international stage and implementing geopolitical decisions. Another opinion posits that economic diplomacy is a process in which countries interact with the outside world to maximize national gains in all areas of activity, including trade, investment, and other forms of economic exchange where they have a comparative advantage; Economic diplomacy has bilateral, regional, and multilateral dimensions, each of which has an important role (Rana, 2012).

Economic diplomacy is also closely related to the use of government resources in terms of promoting a country's economic growth by increasing trade, promoting investment, collaboration in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, and so on (Mulyaman et al., 2025). The process is carried out by countries to interact with other countries to maximize national benefits in all activities, including trade, investment, and other activities that provide economic benefits (Hutabarat & Damayanti, 2023)

Economic diplomacy activities can be used as a method marker for countries to utilize cross-border economic activities for the national interests of a country. If a country conducts diplomacy, such as economic diplomacy, then there are interests that it wants to achieve (Ismail, 2019). These interests, in the context of economic diplomacy, aim to

encourage the country's economic growth. In other words, economic diplomacy is a combination of the meaning of diplomacy goals in the context of national economic interests through economic activities.

There are at least 3 elements that exist in economic diplomacy, including: (a) the existence of political influence and relations used as a tool to promote and influence trade and investment activities, (b) the use of economic assets in terms of increasing the cost of conflict and strengthening mutually beneficial relations between the parties, (c) efforts in terms of creating an international political climate and environment in an effort to achieve the goals of economic diplomacy (van Bergeijk & Moons, 2009). These elements imply that countries' ability to carry out economic diplomacy is different. These differences are usually caused by internal and external factors, both in terms of material and non-material resources. The impact is that there is an imbalance in the economic diplomacy process between countries that have higher power (developed countries) and lower ones (developing countries) (Killian, 2012).

Economic diplomacy can also be used as a strategy, policy, process, or activity (Killian, 2021). The application of economic diplomacy also has different meanings. This is due to differences in understanding or determining the goals of economic diplomacy. Whether the goal is for purely economic or commercial activities, or foreign policy goals, even for economic and political purposes (Killian, 2021).

In the context of this study, economic diplomacy is used to analyze Indonesia's efforts to utilize its economic activities by utilizing resources in the non-traditional market share, namely the African Region, to the maximum. The utilization of the African Region's market share not only has an impact on increasing Indonesia's economic activities abroad as well as increasing Indonesia's GDP, but also increasing Indonesia's power in the region. Thus, these economic diplomacy activities not only have an impact on the economic sector, but also have an impact on the political sector.

This study uses an analytical descriptive research approach. Analytical descriptive research describes or provides an overview of the research object through the data or samples collected, as it is, and draws generally applicable conclusions (Sugiyono, 2009). The approach in this study uses a qualitative approach aimed at systematically describing the facts or characteristics of a particular population factually and accurately. Research with a qualitative approach is usually based on social science that is critical or interpretive, and talks about cases and contexts. Qualitative research emphasizes on the presentation of cases that arise in social life, and always tries to avoid authentic and sensitive interpretations of socio-historical contexts (Neumann, 2007). This approach was chosen to explore in depth how Indonesia's economic diplomacy efforts in the African region as a new market share.

In terms of data collection techniques, this study uses a literature review. Literature reviews are concerned with research and other references such as books, magazines, and literature. Reviewing and understanding relevant research from various sources will greatly assist researchers in determining whether they have a comprehensive understanding (Sugiyono, 2009). During the data collection process, the researcher collected all data from books, scientific journals, and internet media related to economic diplomacy.

The data analysis techniques used in this article include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). The authors first collected data from various sources. The data collected is related to Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African region. After that, the collected data was simplified by extracting essential elements and used as an analytical tool in this study. Next, the researcher classifies the data to be used as supporting data or primary data. This aims to make it easier for the author to determine which data is needed and which is not for this article. Thus, classified data can be presented in a more structured manner, facilitating analysis, and producing conclusions to answer the formulation of the problem that has been predetermined.

### **Result and Discussion**

In this section, the author begins the discussion with the history of Indonesia's presence in the African Region. Furthermore, the presence is condensed to the history of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and several countries in the African region, the author specializes in Egypt and South Africa. These countries are countries in the African region that are classified as developed from several other countries. In addition, there are many economic diplomacy efforts carried out by Indonesia against these countries. Furthermore, it was closed with the Indonesia-Africa Forum as the entrance to economic diplomacy as well as describing several benefits for Indonesia, both in terms of economy and politics.

In 1947, several Indonesian diplomats, namely H. Agus Salim, Abdurrahman Baswedan, HM Rasjidi and Natsir Pamuntjak, sought recognition as well as legalized Indonesia's sovereignty as a nation in the international world. This is an important aspect that helps strengthen the status of the country (Amirio, 2018). When Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945, only a handful of countries recognized the declaration, including Egypt. This recognition is a political habit, if Indonesia's independence is not recognized by other countries, especially Western countries, it will have a bad impact because it is not considered as an independent country.

Until finally, in 1947, Egypt became one of the first countries to officially recognize and declare bilateral relations with Indonesia. After the following years, after 1957,

Indonesia's relations with Egypt became closer. This was marked by the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement initiated by Soekarno with an Egyptian figure, namely Gamal Abdel Nasser (Amirio, 2018). The close relationship between the two countries was marked by the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1947. Both are countries with a large Muslim majority and are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement, G20 and several other state organizations. The trade potential is reflected in the trade value of the two countries reaching US\$ 1.31 billion as of December 2023. Indonesia's trade track record with Egypt, exports in the last 10 years are on an upward trend. The lowest of Indonesia's exports is US\$ 1.01 billion and the highest export is US\$ 1.65 billion (Darmawan, 2025). The commodities exported are crude palm oil, coffee, tea, textiles, and electronic devices.

At the same time, Indonesia's economic diplomacy efforts towards Egypt are getting stronger. Since 2024, Indonesia and Egypt have agreed to increase bilateral trade between the two countries towards free trade (Free Trade Agreement / FTA). At the moment of the meeting between the Minister of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, Zulkifli Hasan, and the Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of Egypt, Yahya El Wathik Bellah, said that Indonesia and Egypt have a long relationship of cooperation, brotherhood, and history long before Indonesia's independence. Therefore, the two countries agreed and fully supported the improvement of bilateral trade relations in a better direction, towards the Indonesia-Egypt free trade agreement (Fajri, 2024).

The moment was followed by a diplomatic visit by the Indonesian House of Representatives Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Agency (BKSAP) to Egypt in December 2024. One of the topics discussed was the development of MSMEs and leading commodities of the two countries. This was also said by Gulam Mohamad Sharon, a member of the BKSAP of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, saying that the visit was important to strengthen the role of MSMEs in international trade. Of course, this is in line with President Prabowo Subianto's vision in encouraging MSMEs to become the driving force of global trade (Mardiansyah, 2024). In addition, Indonesia and Egypt also encourage the realization of the Visa-Free Agreement to improve trade, tourism, and cultural relations between the two countries to strengthen economic diplomacy that supports Indonesia's vision as a world trade center (Mardiansyah, 2024).

Indonesia's economic diplomacy efforts against Egypt continue. This was marked by the signing of a Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt by the President of the Republic of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto and the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in April 2025. The strategic partnership cannot be separated from the historical ties that have been closely established between

Indonesia and Egypt for decades. The two countries are important partners in the Islamic world and developing countries, and have a long history of political, economic, and educational cooperation that upholds the values of justice, mutual respect, and mutual trust (setkab.go.id., 2025).

There are at least three pillars of the strategic partnership that have been built, including, first, the strong historical ties between Indonesia and Egypt as founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and an important partner in the Islamic world. Second, the same values in upholding the principles of justice, mutual respect, and mutual trust. Third, the strategic interests of the two countries as key partners among developing countries (Sutomo, 2025).

The strategic partnership aims to strengthen the long-standing friendship and cooperation between the two countries from various priority areas. In the field of politics and security, the two countries will improve coordination on regional issues such as Palestine. In the economic sector, trade and investment cooperation will be increased. The defense sector will be focused on joint military exercises and technology transfer, while in the fields of education and culture will be strengthened through student exchanges and cultural heritage preservation (Sutomo, 2025).

Before the strategic partnership was achieved, there were already several real activities of Indonesia's economic diplomacy towards Egypt. In 2019 at the Indonesian Embassy in Cairo, there were seminars and training activities related to Indonesia's superior products in Egypt, namely coffee, for Indonesian students living in Egypt. The activity was carried out with an introduction to coffee, how to serve it well, and how to open a coffee business. Not only seminars and training activities, Indonesia has held a "Top Barista" competition at the Egyptian coffee festival in 2021. By looking at the superior coffee commodity, the Indonesian Embassy in Cairo opened several coffee shops in several areas in Egypt. In fact, the Indonesian Embassy provides intensive assistance to Egyptian coffee companies to strengthen cooperation with Indonesian coffee exporters. Not only that, Indonesia also uses several diasporas or Indonesian students in Egypt to promote coffee from Indonesia as part of the archipelago's heritage. With these conditions, the Indonesian government introduced coffee diplomacy as part of Indonesia's economic diplomacy agenda in Egypt (Graciella & Amra, 2024).

Not only with Egypt, Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African region is also seen with South Africa. Close relations between the two countries have been established for quite a long time. The history of the Indonesian nation became intertwined when the Dutch colonizers seized the Indonesian homeland and subdued its people. This relationship can be seen in the lineage of several Indonesian people who are also integrated in the rich diversity of South African society, especially in the communities that came to be known as the Malays in the Cape. In 1693 Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar

was exiled to South Africa for his role in the resistance of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa of Banten against the Dutch invasion. Then the name was used as a name in the Cape Flats as a form of respect (Al Farisi, 2019).

Indonesia's relationship with South Africa is very strong, especially in the struggle against oppression, slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. In April 1955, representatives of twenty-nine governments of Asian and African countries gathered in Bandung, Indonesia to discuss peace and the role of the Third World in the Cold War, economic development, and decolonization (Office the Historian, N.d.). The Asian-African Conference (Bandung Conference) which was attended by 29 countries was not only to discuss peace, economic development, and decolonization, but also aimed to build global solidarity in opposing colonialism and seeking economic and cultural cooperation between newly independent countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

The conference highlighted the progress of cooperation between Asian and African countries through initiatives such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP). Indonesia remained consistent in its efforts to strengthen ties with Asian-African countries, where delegates pledged to commit to building stronger, inclusive, and sustainable cooperation. The countries pledged to increase political, economic, and cultural cooperation between the two continents (britannica.com, N.d.). According to the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NAASP is an important forum for cooperation between countries on two continents (Sheany, 2018).

As time went by, Indonesia's relations with South Africa became closer due to the holding of the Bandung Conference in 1955. This became history in the process of South African independence as well as an open path for South Africa to get out of apartheid politics. In 1995, South Africa opened its embassy in Jakarta and this was well received by Indonesia by receiving Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo in 1997. South Africa is also Indonesia's largest trading partner in Africa. Indonesia has a comprehensive strategic partnership between Indonesia and South Africa signed on March 17, 2008 by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and President Thabo Mbeki. Indonesia is confident that in the next 25 years, political, trade, and inter-community diplomacy will strengthen a strong shared history and contribute to the common prosperity with South Africa (Al Farisi, 2019).

There have been several efforts to increase economic diplomacy to a more serious level, namely by making a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Indonesia and South Africa. This is to overcome one of the trade barriers, namely high trade tariffs in South Africa. In 2015-2019, there were various efforts to hold PTA between Indonesia and South Africa. However, the PTA's efforts must be carried out through the door of

the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) organization. This is because South Africa is a member country of the SACU organization, the determination of tariffs on South African export goods is related to the provisions of the SACU organization. The effort to establish the PTA is a continuation of the discussion between President Joko Widodo and President Jacob Zuma during the IORA Summit in Bali who agreed to increase cooperation in the field of trade which was previously stated in the Plan of Action (PoA) 2017-2021 (Febriyanti & Suryadipura, 2022).

Although there have been several bilateral meetings between Indonesia and South Africa, both at the President and Ministerial levels, and have received support from both countries to increase economic cooperation through the PTA, they are still hampered by the agreement on SACU. Another alternative is to create a PTA bilaterally between Indonesia and South Africa. However, these efforts have not resulted in an agreement until now (Febriyanti & Suryadipura, 2022). Despite this, trade relations between the two countries continue to run well. Although there is no specific bilateral free trade agreement, the two countries have been consistent in agreeing on efforts to increase trade and investment in various fields.

However, economic diplomacy activities are still going well and this can be seen from some of Indonesia's leading commodities that are growing rapidly in South Africa. Indonesia has been cooperating with South Africa in the field of trade through the Indonesian Trade Promotion Centre (ITPC). ITPC has been established under the auspices of the Ministry of Trade since 1982 and is spread across various countries in the world, one of which is South Africa. The purpose of ITPC is to facilitate and strengthen trade relations between Indonesia and accredited countries. ITPC Johannesburg is a bridge for products from Indonesia, namely instant noodles which have a considerable appeal. ITPC Johannesburg carries out a trade diplomacy strategy through several expos, in-store promotions, and market tests. In addition, ITPC Johannesburg also provides education to consumers in South Africa about Indonesia's superior products as well as being a speaker at activities related to halal products (Febriyanti & Suryadipura, 2022).

Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African region can not only be carried out bilaterally, but also multilaterally. There are several multilateral channels in the African Region to increase their economic diplomacy activities, one of which is the Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF). The Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF) was declared in April 2018 in Nusa Dua, Bali, as part of Indonesia's efforts to strengthen ties with Africa. The Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF) represents a new chapter in relations between Indonesia and Africa. The purpose of the establishment of the IAF was to realize good political relations between Indonesia and Africa, which were previously built in the Asian-African Conference, into a real economic relationship. Indonesia's economic diplomacy will focus on removing non-tariff barriers in trade with major markets and exploring new

markets through the IAF. Africa is a promising target market for Indonesia, with Nigeria as its entry point (Mardialina & Munir, 2020).

The Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF) is the first forum held by Indonesia to bring together governments, business people, and related parties from Indonesia and African countries. More than 550 people from 53 African countries, including from the public and private sectors, were invited to the IAF forum to study the potential of economic cooperation, strengthen technical cooperation, and finalize existing cooperation (Tempo, 2018). Through the IAF, a business agreement worth 586.56 million US dollars was formed, and Indonesia also showed its commitment to strengthening cooperation with Africa (Tralac, 2018). Several forms of strengthening cooperation are carried out such as increasing technical cooperation and capacity, developing attractive export credit facilities, improving connectivity, and exploring trade agreements through the establishment of preferential trade agreements (Tralac, 2018).

In the investment sector, more than 30 Indonesian companies in the pharmaceutical, textile, and energy sectors operate in Africa. Infrastructure is the main issue discussed at the IAF. Indonesia and Africa view the sector as a top priority for future development. According to the Global Infrastructure Outlook report from the Global Infrastructure Hub, the need for investment in various infrastructure projects in Africa from 2016 to 2040 reached 6 trillion US dollars, equivalent to 5.9% of GDP during the period (Mardialina & Munir, 2020).

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, said that the Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF) produced a number of concrete cooperation, including the signing of business agreements with a value of USD586.56 million and 12 cooperation announcements that have a future economic value of USD1.3 billion. Thus, the total business deals were recorded at USD1.89 billion in various sectors such as infrastructure, financing, strategic industries, mining, textiles, aircraft maintenance services, and commodities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

From the economic diplomacy activities carried out by Indonesia in the African Region, especially Egypt and South Africa, it has a positive impact economically and politically. Economically, Indonesia gets economic benefits from Africa's large market share, import and export activities and so on. In terms of trade barriers, countries in the African region are relatively easy to trade barriers. Vice Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) Coordinator for Maritime, Investment, and Foreign Affairs, Shinta W. Kamdani, explained that Africa is very promising because they also have unsophisticated trade barriers. Indonesian entrepreneurs, it is relatively very easy to penetrate the market there even with export products with national standards. On the other hand, Africa is an export market that is very suitable to become the first

export market for national manufactured products before penetrating into export markets with complicated market standards such as the European Union, the United States, Japan, or Australia (Wisnubroto, 2023).

In the context of Egypt, the Indonesia-Egypt trade trend shows a positive growth of 8.65 percent in the period between 2019 and 2023, and it is even expected that the trade trend will reach USD 3 billion in the next 5 years. Data in 2023 said that the total trade between the two countries was recorded at USD1.51 billion, with Indonesia's exports to Egypt amounting to USD1.31 billion, and Indonesia's imports from Egypt amounting to USD201.4 million. Thus, Indonesia experienced a trade surplus with Egypt of USD1.11 billion (Fajri, 2024). According to the Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt, Lutfi Rauf, he assessed that Indonesian commodities such as coffee from Lampung and Malang were in great demand in Egypt, resulting in Indonesia's trade balance with Egypt becoming a surplus (Mardiansyah, 2024). In addition, Indonesia's other main export commodities to Egypt are palm oil and its derivatives, spices, coconut, cocoa powder, fishery and marine products, textile yarns, wood products, vehicle tires, passenger vehicles, and other potential products (Fajri, 2024).

Meanwhile, in the context of South Africa, in the 2022 period, the value of Indonesia's bilateral trade with South Africa increased rapidly with a total value of US\$ 3.2 billion equivalent to Rp.19.5 trillion. Indonesia's exports to South Africa are worth 1.09 billion US dollars and Indonesia's imports from South Africa are worth US\$ 2.1 billion. This upward trend is a positive achievement after the reduction in the trade deficit in 2020 by US\$ 0.12 billion (Sari, 2023). Meanwhile, in 2024, Indonesia's exports to South Africa will be a portion of 0.31% of Indonesia's total exports. The value is US\$ 780 million in 2024, down from the record in 2023 which was worth US\$ 840 million. Indonesia's exports to South Africa include animal or vegetable fats and oils worth US\$ 316.71 million, machinery and mechanical equipment and their parts worth US\$ 63.94 million, and paper, cardboard, and goods from them amounting to US\$ 61.88 million (Rachman, 2025). Although Indonesia's economic income in the South African region fluctuates, this trade diplomacy program is a good effort to improve the value of Indonesia's exports to South Africa after the 19-19 pandemic (Sari, 2023).

Not only the economic impact felt by Indonesia, politically it has a positive impact on Indonesia. In terms of strengthening diplomatic influence (soft power) has an impact on Indonesia in the African region. Indonesia has gained a good image in the eyes of African countries as an equal partner. This is not only limited to providing assistance, but also as a trading partner, investor, and builder (state capitalism). On the other hand, Indonesia's foreign policy that has evolved to Africa has made it a tool for economic engagement with Africa as an important diplomatic instrument in the era of President Jokowi (Thomson, 2023). In addition, it also strengthens Indonesia's position

in South-South Cooperation which is active in global organizations, not only recipients of aid (Zaelani, 2019).

With the market share in the African region, Indonesia does not become politically dependent on other countries. The reason is, when Indonesia is based on one market, politically, Indonesia will be dependent and adjust its existing political policies. Therefore, dependence is not only on one party, but must be politically interdependent. Indonesia's position in the African region can also strengthen the bargaining position in international forums involving Africa, such as the Asia Africa Forum (Mardialina & Munir, 2020). For example, Indonesia will easily get support from countries in the African Region when the issues faced by Indonesia are also faced by countries in the African Region such as climate change, food security, pandemics, migration, and so on.

Indonesia's presence in the African region also indicates that Indonesia is ready to compete with other major countries, such as China, India, and other European countries that compete to establish influence, including competition in investment, infrastructure projects, and access to natural resources. Indonesia must compete to keep its projects attractive. This causes Indonesia to be involved in more complex geopolitical dynamics, such as having to reconcile maintaining good relations with major powers and maintaining strategic independence. In addition, Indonesia can also spread the ideological values embraced by Indonesia of democracy, pluralism, and tolerance to countries in the African region with a diplomacy approach based on cooperation rather than domination.

### **Conclusion**

Indonesia's economic diplomacy efforts in the African Region are important to see that the African Region has its own characteristics. The large market share when viewed from the population, is an attraction for Indonesia to penetrate the market. The historical proximity between Indonesia and countries in the African region is another factor in economic diplomacy efforts. For example, Indonesia's strong economic diplomacy efforts towards Egypt are marked by an agreement to increase bilateral trade, namely the signing of a Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership between Indonesia and Egypt in 2025. In the context of other countries, namely South Africa, Indonesia and South Africa do not have more established economic cooperation in the form of PTAs and FTAs and so on. However, trade activities between Indonesia and South Africa continue to run with a positive impact on both countries. Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African Region is not only in bilateral channels, but can also be utilized in multilateral channels, namely through the Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF), South-South Cooperation, the Asian-African Conference (KAA) and other organizations.

The implementation of Indonesia's economic diplomacy in the African Region has a positive impact in the economic and political fields. In terms of economy, the existence of a new market share makes Indonesia more alternatives to market its export goods to various countries. It also has an impact that Indonesia does not depend on one market share, such as Asia, America, and Europe. On the other hand, Indonesia benefits from the trade balance so that it has an impact on the Indonesian economy. Indonesia can also take advantage of strategic trade routes in the African Region to improve the economy. Not only in terms of economy, other advantages are from a political perspective. Indonesia's presence in Africa increased its diplomatic influence. Indonesia is considered an equal partner and not only as a donor, but also as an investor and economic actor. This supports Indonesia's position in South-South cooperation and strengthens bargaining power in international forums. Indonesia's presence in the African Region shows its readiness to compete with major countries such as China and India. Indonesia also seeks to spread values such as democracy and tolerance through cooperative diplomacy.

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