

Historical Development of Republic of Türkiye–Indonesia Relations

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Türkiye Cumhuriyeti–Endonezya İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Gelişimi

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Endonezya arasındaki tarihsel ilişkilerin gelişimini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Osmanlı Devleti’nin Açe Sultanlığı’na verdiği destekle başlayan temaslar, Endonezya’nın bağımsızlığını kazanmasının ardından diplomatik ilişkilerin kurulmasıyla yeni bir boyut kazanmıştır. Çalışmada Türkiye–Endonezya ilişkilerinin diplomatik, ekonomik ve insani boyutları ele alınarak iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin hangi süreçlerden geçerek geliştiği ortaya konulmaktadır. Araştırma, arşiv belgeleri, resmi yayınlar ve ilgili akademik literatürden yararlanılarak belge analizi yöntemiyle yürütülmüştür. Elde edilen bulgular, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin yalnızca diplomatik temaslarla sınırlı kalmadığını; ticaret, kültürel etkileşim ve özellikle doğal afetler sonrasında gerçekleştirilen insani yardımlar aracılığıyla çok boyutlu bir nitelik kazandığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye–Endonezya ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimini bütüncül bir yaklaşımla ele alarak literatürdeki sınırlı sayıdaki araştırmaya katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Endonezya, Diplomasi, Deprem, Tsunami

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the historical development of relations between the Republic of Türkiye and Indonesia. Contacts between the two regions date back to the Ottoman Empire’s support for the Aceh Sultanate and gained a new dimension with the establishment of diplomatic relations following Indonesia’s independence. The study analyzes the diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian dimensions of Türkiye–Indonesia relations and explores the processes through which these relations have evolved. The research employs the document analysis method by utilizing archival documents, official publications, and relevant academic literature. The findings indicate that relations between the two countries have developed in a multidimensional manner, extending beyond diplomatic contacts to include trade, cultural interaction, and humanitarian assistance, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters. By examining the historical development of Türkiye–Indonesia relations through a comprehensive perspective, this study seeks to contribute to the limited literature on the subject.

Keywords: Republic of Türkiye, Indonesia, Diplomacy, Earthquake, Tsunami.

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

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1. Introduction

Historical contacts between the Indonesian archipelago and the Ottoman world have attracted the attention of both historians and scholars of international relations. In Indonesian oral traditions and historical narratives, references to Turks appear in various legends and stories that attempt to establish

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symbolic or genealogical links between Turkic dynasties and Malay royal lineages. Although these narratives are not always historically verifiable, they nevertheless indicate the existence of a long-standing perception of connections between the two regions. More concrete historical evidence points to the sixteenth century, when the Sultanate of Aceh sought assistance from the Ottoman Empire against Portuguese expansion in Southeast Asia. This episode represents one of the earliest documented forms of contact between the Ottoman Empire and the Indonesian world and has been widely examined in both Turkish and international scholarship (Gürsoy, 1999: 175–187; Kurtulmuş, 1988: 329–332; Reid, 1996: 42–48; Reid, 1997: 49–53; Dinçer, 2010: 954–973).

However, the colonial domination of the Indonesian archipelago by European powers led to the interruption of direct relations for several centuries. Diplomatic and institutional ties between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Indonesia began only after Indonesia gained its independence in 1945 and its sovereignty was formally recognized in 1949. Despite the considerable geographical distance separating the two countries, bilateral relations have developed steadily through diplomatic initiatives, economic cooperation, educational exchanges, and cultural interactions. Over time, these relations have deepened and in recent years have reached the level of a strategic partnership.

Symbolic gestures also play an important role in reflecting the mutual recognition of historical ties between the two countries. To illustrate this symbolic dimension, the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Council decided on 11 October 2021 to rename a street in the Hilal neighborhood of Çankaya District—where the Indonesian Embassy is located—after Ahmed Sukarno, the leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement and the first President of Indonesia. Significantly, the street had previously been named Holland, referring to the colonial power against which Indonesia fought for independence. In a reciprocal gesture, a street in Jakarta has been named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The decision of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Council was unanimously adopted at a meeting attended by 103 council members (Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Council, 2021). Such commemorative practices illustrate how historical memory and diplomatic symbolism contribute to the contemporary perception of bilateral relations.

In recent years, a growing body of scholarship in Türkiye has examined Indonesia from various perspectives. The edited volumes *Indonesia Studies in Türkiye I* and *Indonesia Studies in Türkiye II*, published by the Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center at Ankara University, provide important analyses not only of Indonesian society and politics but also of Türkiye–Indonesia relations (Dündar & Durmaz, 2022; Dündar & Duran, 2024). In addition, comparative studies have explored the economic structures of the two countries and evaluated the effects of economic crises on both economies (Koyuncu & Şenses, 2004: 11–52). Research conducted in Türkiye has also addressed Indonesia’s political system, religious life, and cultural characteristics, with the works of İsmail Hakkı Gürsoy occupying a prominent place in the development of Indonesian studies in Türkiye.

Academic and educational exchanges have further contributed to the development of bilateral relations. According to the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), as of 2024 a total of 106 theses related to Indonesia have been completed in various academic fields in Türkiye. A considerable number of these studies have been produced by Indonesian students studying in Turkish universities. Official data indicate that more than 1,000 Indonesian students have benefited from Turkish scholarship programs since 1992 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024a). Moreover, the number of Indonesian students studying in Türkiye has increased significantly since 2018, reaching approximately 4,600 at different levels of education (Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia Di Ankara Turki, 2024a). These educational and academic networks have played an important role in strengthening long-term cultural and intellectual connections between the two countries.

Despite the existence of this growing body of research, comprehensive historical studies focusing specifically on the evolution of Türkiye–Indonesia relations remain relatively limited. In particular, there is a need for studies that combine Turkish archival materials with the broader international historiography on Indonesian history and Southeast Asia, including works by scholars such as Ricklefs (2001), Kahin (1952), and Vickers (2005). Addressing this gap, the present article examines the historical development of relations between Türkiye and Indonesia by drawing on archival documents, official publications, and the relevant academic literature. The study aims to identify the main stages of bilateral relations, analyze diplomatic initiatives and agreements concluded between the two countries, and evaluate the forms of cooperation that have emerged over time. By situating Turkish archival evidence within the broader international literature, this article seeks to provide a more comprehensive historical perspective on Türkiye–Indonesia relations and to contribute analytically to the existing scholarship on the subject. In this context, the study seeks to address the following question: how have historical interactions between the Ottoman world and the Indonesian archipelago evolved into the contemporary diplomatic and strategic partnership between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Indonesia? By examining both historical continuities and institutional developments, the article aims to provide a clearer understanding of the dynamics shaping bilateral relations.

The article is structured as follows. The first section discusses the historical background of early contacts between the two regions. The second section examines the development of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Indonesia following Indonesian independence. The final section evaluates the main forms of cooperation between the two countries and analyzes the factors that have shaped the contemporary strategic partnership.

2. Indonesia

Indonesia, an archipelago consisting entirely of islands, saw its first settlements emerge around 3,000 years ago through migration from South China. The land, which became a center of Buddhist and Hindu temples and belief systems, remained under the rule of the Majapahit Hindu Empire until the colonial period in the 13th century. The first colonizers, the Portuguese, established a commercial base in Malacca in 1509. After the Portuguese, the Dutch arrived and settled in the country. Under Dutch colonial rule, the region was known as *Dutch India*. In the 1920s, with the spread of nationalist ideas, the independence movement that arose was harshly suppressed by the Dutch. During World War II, in March 1942, the Japanese occupied the Indonesian islands, which had long been a Dutch colony. The Japanese, unlike the Dutch, cooperated with local nationalists, ending centuries of Dutch occupation. Japan's defeat in World War II paved the way for Indonesia's independence. After Japan decided to support Indonesia's independence struggle, steps were quickly taken, and on August 17, 1945, the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed. Following the end of World War II, with the support of British and Australian forces arriving to take Japan's surrender, the Dutch returned to reclaim their former colony. After approximately four and a half years of struggle, the occupation came to an end on December 27, 1949 (Gürsoy, 1995: 207; Vickers, 2005: 87-106; Ricklefs, 2001: 283-285). As Kahin (1952:50) notes, the successes of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk against Western military powers, alongside events such as the Filipino struggle against Spain, early American occupation in the Philippines, the activities of the Indian Congress party, and the rise of anti-Western Chinese nationalism represented by Sun Yat-sen, contributed to Indonesians' growing confidence that they were not inherently inferior to the Dutch and capable of self-governance. Atatürk's achievements, in particular, served as a symbolic example of modernization and national sovereignty, highlighting the broader transnational influence of successful anti-colonial and reformist leadership in Asia.

During this period, Indonesia not only fought for its independence but also faced various epidemics. In 1947, following an outbreak, aid was requested from Türkiye (TDA, 1947a). Türkiye partially responded positively to the request. Medications and medical supplies provided by the Turkish Red Crescent were sent to *The Egyptian Mission to Indonesia* in Cairo (TDA, 1947b). However, regarding the request for doctors and health personnel, Türkiye responded negatively, citing the lack of such funds and insufficient staff to fulfill the request, even if the funds were provided (TDA, 1947c).

Indonesia's independence struggle was closely followed by Türkiye (1945b). Developments in international news and reports from foreign press outlets were relayed to Ankara by diplomatic missions (TDA 1945c; TDA 1945d). During this process, although Türkiye initially waited for other countries to take steps, it took the first step in 1946 by supporting Indonesia at the London General Assembly (TDA, 1946a). However, for official recognition, Türkiye waited for international developments, and after other countries took steps, Türkiye made its decision and, according to a document dated December 28, 1949, Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak sent a telegram to Indonesian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Hatta, congratulating him and officially recognizing Indonesia's independence. A document in the Turkish Foreign Ministry archives mistakenly lists the year as 1945 (TDA, 1945a). This error might have led to the assumption that Türkiye recognized Indonesia's independence immediately after 1945. However, upon examining the document in detail, it becomes clear that details like the absence of the Turkish Foreign Minister at that time suggest that the date was later added by hand. Furthermore, there is no supporting evidence or other documents confirming that Türkiye took such a step in 1945. Research should carefully address such details (TDA, 1949a; TDA, 1949b; TDA, 1948a; TDA, 1949c; TDA, 1949d.). This step taken by Türkiye was positively received in the press (Son Posta 1949). There was a slight delay in appointing representatives between Türkiye and Indonesia. However, to improve relations, on December 14, 1951, the Council of Ministers decided to establish the *Türkiye-Indonesia Friendship Society* with its headquarters in Istanbul. The document does not specify the names of the president and members of the society's leadership (BCA, 1951).

After the Vietnam War, Indonesia became a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was established to counter the spread of communism. Indonesia is the only ASEAN country that is a member of the G-20. As of 2024, it is the third-largest democracy in the world, after India and the United States, with a population of 282 million. Indonesia is a unitary state with a republican regime, consisting of 34 provinces. It is based on the "Pancasila," the five principles that include belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy, and social justice for the people. Since 2004, the President has been elected by the people for a five-year term. The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) consists of two chambers: the 575-member People's Representative Council (DPR) and the 136-member Regional Representative Council (DPD). Legislative authority lies with the DPR. Among the 34 provinces, Aceh and Papua have Special Autonomy status (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

3. Establishing Diplomatic Missions by Türkiye

Immediately after recognizing Indonesia's independence in 1949, Türkiye's efforts to open a diplomatic mission in Indonesia failed to yield results due to the lack of anticipated actions from the Indonesian side (TDA, 1951). On July 13, 1954, Türkiye made another attempt in this regard. A letter sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Council of Ministers emphasized the necessity of opening an embassy in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. With the Council of Ministers' decree dated July 18, 1954, this decision was made (BCA, 1954). However, the decision could not be implemented until the Indonesian government's request for an embassy in April 1956. The decision regarding Indonesia's embassy request was annulled, and with the new decree of the Council of Ministers on April 5, 1956, the establishment of reciprocal embassies was agreed upon. Consequently, Türkiye's Embassy in

Indonesia was officially opened on April 10, 1957 (BCA, 1956b). For the opening and necessary arrangements, Chargé d’Affaires Şemsu Baharşah was appointed, and on July 4, 1957, Tevfik K. Kemahlı was appointed as Türkiye’s first Ambassador to Jakarta (TDA, 1957a; TDA, 1957b).

In 1973, the Indonesian government granted Türkiye’s Embassy in Jakarta 4282 square meter plot of land free of charge (BCA, 1973a). Additionally, the Turkish Consulate General in Medan began operations in May 1996. According to the official website of the Turkish Embassy in Jakarta, the list of ambassadors is as follows (Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Jakarta, 2024): Tevfik K. Kemahlı (10.04.1957 - 03.05.1960), A. Mennan Tebelen (20.05.1960 - 08.12.1963), Nihat Bozkurt Erman (09.12.1963 - 08.09.1964), Veysel Versan (09.09.1964 - 08.01.1967), Hikmet Şengenç (09.01.1967 - 19.08.1968), Vahap Aşıroğlu (20.08.1968 - 20.09.1970), Daver Darende (21.09.1970 - 11.08.1971), Erol Gürol (12.08.1971 - 29.12.1971), Semih Baran (30.12.1971 - 21.09.1976), Aydemir Erman (22.09.1976 - 25.07.1978), Haluk Kocaman (26.07.1978 - 14.01.1981), Pûlât Yüksel Tacar (08.03.1981 - 31.10.1984), Aydın Alacakaptan (02.11.1984 - 16.09.1986), Metin İnegöllüoğlu (30.09.1986 - 15.07.1989), Sencer Asena (25.07.1989 - 25.05.1992), Sevinç Dalyanoğlu (30.05.1992 - 16.03.1998), Mehmet Günay (01.04.1998 - 19.05.1999), Deniz Uzmen (14.06.1999 - 21.11.2001), Feryal Çotur Önder (29.11.2001 - 17.12.2005), Aydın Evirgen (28.12.2005 - 30.08.2010), Murat Adalı (01.12.2010 - 15.03.2012), Zekeriya Akçam (11.04.2012 - 31.05.2016), Mehmet Kadri Şander Gürbüz (01.06.2016 - 24.08.2018), Mahmut Erol Kılıç (18.03.2019 - 30.04.2021), Aşkın Asan (15.12.2021 - 15.10.2022), Prof. Dr. Talip Küçükcan (26.04.2023 - Present).

Before the establishment of the Indonesian Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye took action regarding the appointment of an ambassador. The first name in the archival documents for the *agremán* request was General R. H. Abdülkadir. However, it is not clear from the documents whether this person started his duties or not. According to the relevant document, General Abdülkadir held various positions such as the Kabul Mission, Afghanistan Embassy, Iranian Embassy, Cairo Embassy, Indonesia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Africa and Middle East Affairs Department, and more (BCA, 1956a). After General Abdülkadir, a request for an *agremán* was made on September 7, 1957, for Dr. Sultan Muhammad’s appointment as Ambassador (BCA, 1957b). Dr. Muhammad was assigned to Türkiye after serving in the Rome Embassy. Following Dr. Muhammad, an *agremán* request was sent on August 24, 1959, for M. Raden Subjakto’s appointment as Ambassador (BCA, 1959). However, instead of Ambassador Subjakto, an *agremán* request was submitted on December 28, 1963, for the appointment of Sugiarto S. H. as Ambassador (BCA, 1963). As of the time of the research, Dr. Lalu Muhamad Iqbal is serving as the Ambassador of Indonesia in Türkiye (Kedutaan Besar Republik Indonesia Di Ankara Turki, 2024c).

Inter-parliamentary relations between Türkiye and Indonesia also play an important role in their bilateral relations. In this context, organizations such as the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), in which both countries are members, aim to promote peace in Asia. Established in Bangladesh in 1999, the Assembly was known as the Asian Peace Parliamentary Association (AAPP) until 2006 (Asian Parliamentary Assembly, 2024a). The current President of the Assembly is Sabiha Gafarova, the Chairman of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan. Additionally, former Presidents of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) such as Numan Kurtulmuş, Mustafa Şentop, Binali Yıldırım, and İsmail Kahraman also served as Presidents of the APA (Asian Parliamentary Assembly, 2024b). Another inter-parliamentary union both countries are members of is the “Islamic Parliamentary Union (İSİPAB),” which was established in Tehran, Iran, on June 17, 1999. İSİPAB consists of 54 parliamentary members, and its current President is Abdürrahman Dusak, a Member of Parliament from Şanlıurfa, Türkiye (TBMM, 2024a). Furthermore, the Parliamentary Union Inter-Parliamentary (PAB), founded in Geneva in 1889, is another union in which both countries’ parliaments are members. PAB focuses on issues such as peace and disarmament, human rights, parliamentary support, women's rights, and sustainable development. Its current President is Duarte Pacheco (TBMM, 2024b).

4. Visits of Representatives of Both Countries

After Türkiye officially recognized Indonesia, visits played a significant role in enhancing the relations between the two countries. Although visits from Türkiye occurred much later, Indonesia made several important visits to Türkiye. The first visit was made by Dr. Alfian Yusuf Hilmi, one of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry officials, in January 1950 (TDA, 1949e; TDA, 1949f; TDA, 1949g; TDA, 1949h; TDA, 1950a). After Dr. Alfian Yusuf Hilmi's visit, another anticipated visit was made by former Indonesian Prime Minister Abdurrahman Basuydan and the leader of the People's Party, Mehmet (Mehemmet) Nazır (Nasır), to Türkiye. Notably, the official documentation sent to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighted that this visit was not official, and the program was not yet confirmed. The Indonesian officials, who visited the Governor of Istanbul, stated that Indonesia, being a young country, considered Türkiye as a developed and important role model, and for this reason, they were following Atatürk's legacy and the Turkish Revolution. Additionally, discussions were held on labor laws, land laws, and the role of Islam in the fight against communism (TDA, 1952a; TDA, 1952b; Akşam, 1952). A document dated March 27, 1954, indicates that a friendship delegation from Indonesia visited Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. During the meeting, the relationship between the two countries was discussed. Prime Minister Menderes expressed the importance they attached to bilateral relations and mentioned that a friendship delegation would soon visit Indonesia (TDA, 1954).

After the establishment of bilateral relations, diplomatic missions were opened, and visits were made. The most notable visit was by Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno, who visited Türkiye at the invitation of President Celal Bayar. Although the visit took place in 1959, the invitation had been extended years earlier. President Sukarno's visit was closely followed by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During his visit to Germany in June 1956, Türkiye's Ambassador to Bonn met with President Sukarno (TDA, 1956a). Since the meeting was brief, the invitation was not conveyed at that time, so the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs tasked the Ambassador to Switzerland with delivering the invitation, as President Sukarno's next stop was Switzerland (TDA, 1956b). The Ambassador to Bern was successful in delivering President Celal Bayar's invitation to President Sukarno (TDA, 1956c).

In 1959, Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno visited Türkiye and was greeted by President Celal Bayar. After the welcoming ceremony, President Sukarno went to the Foreign Ministry Mansion to rest for a while before proceeding to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM), where he addressed the members of parliament. At the beginning of his speech, President Sukarno, as noted in the research, expressed his gratitude for the help Ottoman Empire provided to the Aceh Sultanate. He mentioned that the purpose of his visit was to improve bilateral relations and dedicated most of his speech to his country's struggle for independence and the subsequent events (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) Proceedings, 1959a). After his speech at the Grand National Assembly, President Sukarno held meetings with President Celal Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. The honorary citizenship of Ankara awarded to him was a sign of the attention he received. After completing his program in Ankara, President Sukarno traveled to Istanbul, where he visited historical sites, and Istanbul University awarded him an honorary doctorate in law. President Sukarno left Türkiye on April 29, 1959 (Ertan and Demirtaş, 2021, 1721-1722).

In addition to international meetings, visits directly to Indonesia were also significant. One of the first visits was by Istanbul Member of Parliament Nazlı Tılabar. Tılabar participated in a meeting of the Asian States Anti-Communist Union held in Bangkok from April 23-30, 1958, and after the meeting, he visited Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia (BCA, 1958). A visit from Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Indonesia took place in 1973. Ümit Haluk Bayülken, along with a delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited Indonesia as an official guest in August 1973 (BCA, 1973b).

Following this visit, a high-level visit took place in January 1978 by a delegation from the Republic Senate, led by Senate President Sırrı Atalay (BCA, 1978). The first visit at the presidential level from Türkiye was made by President Kenan Evren. As part of his tour of East Asian countries, President Evren visited Indonesia from December 17-20, 1982 (BCA, 1982). At the prime ministerial level, a visit to Indonesia was made by Prime Minister Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan in August 1996. As part of his tour that included Iran, Pakistan, Singapore, and Malaysia, Prime Minister Erbakan also visited Indonesia (BCA, 1996).

High-level visits also occurred from Indonesia to Türkiye. One of these visits was by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who, like President Sukarno, addressed the members of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) Proceedings, 2010). President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono began his speech by invoking the phrase "Bismillah" and, like President Sukarno, referenced the Ottoman Empire's support for the Aceh Sultanate, grounding the relations in historical context. He emphasized that both countries have opportunities to further develop their relations. In his speech, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono frequently referenced democracy, noting that both countries were democratic nations with large Muslim populations, which could serve as an example to other nations (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) Proceedings, 2010: 515-521).

5. Agreements Signed Between Türkiye and Indonesia

The agreements shaping the relations between Türkiye and Indonesia began with the "Trade Agreement between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Indonesia" signed on September 14, 1959, by Ismael M. Thajeb, Head of the Economy and Trade Delegation from Indonesia, and Oğuz Gökmen from Türkiye. According to the agreement, the goods exported from Indonesia to Türkiye included tin, rubber, tea, cocoa, spices, leather, copra, and sisal fiber. The goods allowed to be exported from Türkiye to Indonesia were cement, cotton textiles, cotton yarn, dried fruits, pharmaceuticals, and tobacco (Official Gazette, 1960). In addition to the trade agreement, the "Cultural Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia," published in the Official Gazette on March 13, 1977, and entered into force, was signed during the 1973 visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Haluk Bayülken to Indonesia. The agreement, signed by Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik on behalf of Indonesia, aimed to strengthen cultural relations between the two countries through visits (Official Gazette, 1977; Official Gazette, 1978).

The first agreement revisiting the commercial agreement was the "Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia," which enhanced commercial relations. Under this agreement, cooperation was established in the fields of industry, agriculture, transportation/communications, tourism, trade, joint ventures, and construction. Signed by Sermet R. Pasin on behalf of Türkiye and Prof. Dr. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja on behalf of Indonesia, the agreement came into effect on June 19, 1983 (Official Gazette 1983). This agreement also reflects that the relations between Türkiye and Indonesia were pursued in a multidimensional manner. As per the agreement, mixed economy commissions met on various occasions and made positive decisions for the development of relations between the two countries (Official Gazette 1985; Official Gazette, 1988).

Following the acceleration of commercial activities, Türkiye facilitated easier access for Indonesian tourists. A decision made on December 26, 1992, allowed Indonesian citizens to travel for short-term tourist purposes (up to two months) without a visa (Official Gazette, 1992). However, this decision was revoked on August 31, 1994 (Official Gazette, 1994). Cooperation between the two countries also extended to agriculture. The agricultural cooperation protocol aimed to implement activities such as

the exchange of experts, educational activities, seminars, and meetings, as well as joint investment development in the agricultural field, just as in other areas (Official Gazette, 1995). In 1998, Türkiye signed agreements with several countries concerning the encouragement and protection of investments, and an agreement was signed with Indonesia as well, alongside agreements with Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Latvia, Sweden, and Estonia. Additionally, Türkiye and Indonesia ratified the "Agreement and Protocol to Prevent Double Taxation and Prevent Tax Evasion on Income Between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Indonesia" (Official Gazette, 1998a).

As trade relations and mutual investments between the two countries grew, the "Decision on the Approval of the Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for the Promotion and Protection of Investments" was adopted to safeguard the rights of investors (Official Gazette, 1998b). As seen from the agreements between Türkiye and Indonesia, while trade relations form the core of bilateral relations, efforts have been made to build multifaceted cooperation. Although trade agreements are predominant, cultural cooperation has also been developed. In this context, cultural exchange programs between the ministries of culture and tourism of both countries have led to collaboration in cinema, exhibitions, archaeology, museology, performing arts, intellectual property rights, and the prevention of cultural property trafficking (Official Gazette, 2010).

In addition to cultural cooperation, significant steps have been taken in the field of security. A memorandum of understanding was signed between Türkiye's Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) and Indonesia's Financial Transactions Reporting and Analysis Center (INTRAC) to exchange intelligence on money laundering and terrorism financing. The following crimes were specified by the Indonesian side: a. Corruption; b. Bribery; c. Smuggling; d. Human trafficking; e. Illegal immigration; f. Banking crimes; g. Capital market crimes; h. Insurance crimes; i. Drugs; j. Psychotropic substances; k. Human trafficking; l. Illegal arms trade; m. Kidnapping; n. Terrorism; o. Theft; p. Embezzlement; q. Fraud; r. Counterfeiting; s. Gambling; t. Prostitution; u. Tax crimes; v. Forest crimes; w. Environmental crimes; x. Maritime crimes; y. Other crimes punishable by 4 years or more imprisonment. Türkiye specified the following crimes: - Participation in organized crime, extortion, blackmail, terrorism, including financing terrorism, human trafficking, illegal immigration, sexual exploitation, including child sexual abuse, drug trafficking, and illegal trafficking of psychotropic substances, illegal arms trade, illegal trade of stolen and other goods, corruption and bribery, fraud, counterfeiting, production of counterfeit and pirated goods, environmental crimes, murder, grievous bodily harm, kidnapping, unlawful detention, hostage-taking, robbery and theft, smuggling, mugging, document forgery, piracy, insider trading and manipulation (Official Gazette, 2007).

Additionally, the "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for the Abolition of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic and Service Passports" was signed, granting visa exemptions for citizens with diplomatic and service passports for stays of up to 30 days, which could be extended to 90 days within a six-month period (Official Gazette 2011). A step taken at the end of 2021 also introduced visa exemptions for Indonesian citizens holding ordinary passports, allowing them to enter Türkiye for up to 30 days within a 180-day period (Official Gazette 2021). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish citizens holding special and ordinary passports are subject to visa requirements for up to 30-day tourist visits. Visas for entry into Indonesia are issued at border checkpoints for a fee of \$35 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024c).

Relations between Türkiye and Indonesia have improved continuously and were pursued in a multifaceted manner. In 2017, a significant step was taken in bilateral relations with the signing of the "Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia." The agreement includes not only the provision of

materials for defense industries but also joint research, development, and production (Official Gazette, 2017). As an example of this agreement, a joint program between PT Pindad in Indonesia and FNSS in Türkiye is ongoing today. The Kaplan MT (HARIMAU) Medium Weight Class Tank Serial Production Long-Term Cooperation Contract is currently producing the Kaplan Tank (known as the Harimau Tank in Indonesia) (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Ankara, 2024a; FNSS 2024). This partnership continues to thrive today.

6.Indonesia's Position on the Cyprus Issue

One of the key elements shaping Türkiye's foreign policy is the Cyprus Issue. Türkiye, which is highly sensitive to the security of the Turkish Cypriots on the island, has taken diplomatic and military steps in response to violations concerning this issue. In this context, international support was extremely important because, in response to the steps taken by Greece, some states on the international stage supported the policy of legitimizing the attacks on the island. On August 16, 1954, in its application to the United Nations regarding Cyprus, Greece argued that the Greek Cypriots on the island should be granted self-determination. The General Committee submitted the matter to the General Assembly with 9 votes in favor, 3 against, and 3 abstentions. Both the United Kingdom and Türkiye requested that the matter be removed from the UN agenda, stating that such a step would turn the already tense situation on the island into a conflict. Indonesia, during this process, took a stance opposite to Türkiye (Balıkçioğlu, 2016: 72-73). When Greece's attempt was unsuccessful, a new initiative was made on March 13, 1956. Greece applied again to the United Nations, claiming that the United Kingdom was exerting pressure on the Greek Cypriots and that the right to self-determination was not recognized. They requested that the issue be discussed at the General Assembly. During this process, countries clearly expressed their positions. Indonesia's stance on the issue was that there were two distinct communities on the island, and both communities' rights should be protected. Indonesia recognized Türkiye as the primary party to the issue due to the existence of the Turkish population on the island and for strategic, geographical, historical, and legal reasons. This stance was welcomed by Türkiye (Balıkçioğlu, 2026: 169). This initiative by Indonesia also brought the Cyprus issue to the forefront of the country's press (TDA, 1957c).

Cyprus became a central point of constant tension. On December 21, 1963, armed Greek Cypriot gangs launched planned attacks against Turkish civilians on the island, causing an uproar in Türkiye. After diplomatic steps failed, on December 25, 1963, five Turkish fighter jets conducted warning flights over the island (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1964). During these events, Türkiye pursued a multifaceted foreign policy and sought international support. In the Cold War years, alongside the Eastern and Western Bloc countries, a third bloc called the Non-Aligned Movement emerged. Indonesia became a member of this movement in 1961 and served as its general secretary between 1992-1995. On May 28, 1965, Indonesia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Mrs. Supeni, visited Ankara. In her statement at the airport, she expressed support for a solution to the Cyprus issue based on self-determination. After meeting with the President and the Foreign Minister on May 29, 1965, she left Ankara on May 30, 1965 (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1964). Prior to this statement, Indonesia's Red Cross Society, on February 18, 1965, sent 100 liters of Chotypa vaccine and 100,000 quinine tablets to Cyprus with a note stating, "This assistance, as a small gift from our brotherhood, we hope will help the troubled Turkish Cypriots," and these were delivered by the Turkish Embassy in Jakarta (Keser, 2010: 315). In 1976, although Türkiye's request for recognition of Turkish Cypriots' rights was rejected by the United Nations General Assembly, Indonesia supported Türkiye during this process. In 1982, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusuma Maja expressed support for Türkiye's stance on the Aegean Sea, citing security concerns. The occupation of East Timor by Indonesia in 1975 provoked various reactions. During this period, Türkiye supported Indonesia, and in 1985, President Suharto, who visited Türkiye, thanked Türkiye for its support (Çolakoğlu and Güler,

2011: 16). In recent years, Indonesia has displayed varying positions on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. For example, during the 32nd Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held between June 28-30, 2005, a text regarding Cyprus was presented, which included the term "Turkish Republic of Cyprus." This representation proposal was accepted with Indonesia's reservation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 2024). In response, Türkiye participated in the ceremonies on July 20, 2005, marking the anniversary of the Cyprus Operation and the Peace and Freedom Day in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where Indonesia was present (EU Presidency, 2005).

7. Humanitarian Aid

International relations are not solely based on diplomatic ties and political developments. Therefore, one of the elements shaping the relations between two countries is humanitarian aid. As stated earlier, after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Indonesia, both countries have experienced many natural disasters. In both countries, many natural disasters, especially earthquakes, have resulted in the loss of lives. During these times, providing aid goes beyond the relations between the two countries and is one of the key elements shaping their relationship. While there is considerable research on natural disasters in Türkiye, the international dimension of these events has not been sufficiently addressed. The aftermath of natural disasters, from an international relations perspective, is important, especially in terms of humanitarian efforts and diplomacy. Therefore, in light of the information found in archives regarding humanitarian aid between Türkiye and Indonesia, the aid provided is presented above.

On December 26, 2004, a 9.1 or 9.3 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, followed by a tsunami, which caused devastating effects not only in Indonesia but also in Southeast Asia. Türkiye immediately responded to the disaster and, according to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' press release on January 11, 2005, provided a total of \$9 million in humanitarian and financial aid. Turkish aid organizations immediately sent aid to these affected countries, and it was announced that further assistance would continue (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005a). Additionally, on January 16, 2005, a military plane carrying two polyclinics, medical supplies, chlorine tablets, hygiene kits, and 37 health and emergency personnel from the Ministry of Health and the Turkish Red Crescent was sent to Indonesia (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005b).

In 2018, after a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck Sulawesi Island, Indonesia, followed by a tsunami, Türkiye was the first foreign country to send aid. The Turkish Red Crescent and other NGOs immediately sent aid to Indonesia (Anadolu Agency, 2018). Furthermore, Türkiye expressed its condolences and announced its readiness to provide any needed assistance (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

One of the largest earthquakes in Türkiye's history, the 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes, had a devastating impact over a wide area. Following the disaster, significant foreign aid was sent. Immediately after the earthquake, Indonesian President Joko Widodo announced that aid would be sent to Türkiye as a priority. President Widodo stated that Indonesia had not forgotten the help Türkiye had provided during the natural disasters in Indonesia and would now offer assistance in return (Cumhuriyet, 2023). In a report from February 21, 2023, it was announced that 140 tons of humanitarian aid were sent from Halim Perdanakusuma Airport to Türkiye and Syria, with President Widodo personally seeing off the aid (TRT Haber, 2023). Additionally, volunteers from organizations such as Ekolah Relawan, Gerak Bareng, Atap Indonesia, Gerak Menebar Kebajikan, and Khadijatee came to Türkiye to participate in humanitarian activities (Anadolu Agency, 2023). This demonstrated Indonesia's solidarity with Türkiye during its difficult times.

8. Conclusion

Although formal diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Indonesia began after Indonesia's independence and Türkiye's recognition of the new state in 1949, the relationship between the two countries has much deeper historical roots. The contacts established between the Ottoman Empire and the Aceh Sultanate created an important historical foundation that continued to shape bilateral relations in later years. As this study has shown, these early connections, together with shared religious and cultural links, helped preserve a sense of historical continuity between the two countries. The broader political developments of the twentieth century, particularly the spread of anti-colonial movements across Asia and the emergence of newly independent states, also created favourable conditions for closer cooperation. Taken together, these historical developments provided a solid basis for the long-term development of Türkiye–Indonesia relations.

The historical evidence examined in this study suggests that sustained diplomatic engagement and multidimensional cooperation have enabled Türkiye and Indonesia to maintain stable relations despite geographical distance. Economic relations, for instance, are not merely transactional; they reflect strategic complementarity, with Türkiye's exports including machinery, textiles, and electronics, and Indonesia providing critical natural resources such as palm oil. This economic interdependence suggests that trade ties serve as both a stabilizing and growth-oriented mechanism within the broader bilateral framework. Similarly, educational exchanges and cultural initiatives, such as scholarship programs, academic collaborations, and the popularity of Turkish cultural products in Indonesia, function not only as instruments of soft power but also as mechanisms for cultivating long-term mutual understanding. These interactions imply that people-to-people networks and civil society engagements are critical components of the relationship, providing resilience against political fluctuations and reinforcing shared norms and values.

Defense and security cooperation demonstrates that both countries have gradually expanded their partnership beyond diplomacy and trade to include shared regional and global security concerns. Collaborative training programs, counterterrorism initiatives, and coordination through multilateral forums, including the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, reveal a pragmatic dimension in which both nations leverage their diplomatic and institutional capacities to address common challenges. Importantly, the ability of Türkiye and Indonesia to sustain these engagements despite divergent domestic political frameworks—Türkiye's secular institutions versus Indonesia's pluralistic Islamic traditions—demonstrates that shared historical and cultural foundations can bridge structural differences and support cooperative action in complex geopolitical environments.

The analysis of Türkiye–Indonesia relations illustrates that these interactions are deeply rooted in historical continuity while simultaneously shaped by strategic foresight and multi-dimensional diplomacy. The historical legacy of Ottoman-Aceh contacts, combined with the symbolic resonance of shared civilizational and religious values, underpins the durability and depth of contemporary engagement. Economic interdependence, cultural and educational exchanges, and coordinated defense and security efforts demonstrate that the relationship extends beyond functional or episodic cooperation, reflecting a resilient and mutually beneficial partnership. These findings indicate that the contemporary strategic partnership between Türkiye and Indonesia is not merely a product of geographic convenience or economic interest, but emerges from a combination of historical precedent, institutional capacity, and deliberate diplomatic strategy. Integrating Turkish archival materials with broader international historiography further reveals how multi-layered interactions—spanning history, culture, and policy—inform both bilateral decision-making and the perception of shared agency. Continued scholarly attention to these dimensions is essential for understanding the mechanisms that sustain and deepen the partnership, offering insights that may guide future policy-

making, strengthen cultural diplomacy, and reinforce strategic collaboration in the Asia-Pacific and Islamic worlds.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Ethics committee approval was not required for this study.

Author Contributions

The author solely conceived, designed, conducted, and wrote this study.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Extended Summary

This study provides a comprehensive, multidimensional analysis of the historical and contemporary relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Indonesia, drawing heavily upon primary sources from Turkish national archives. It seeks to bridge a significant gap in the existing literature by offering a systematic, archival-based approach to understanding the diplomatic, economic, cultural, and humanitarian dimensions of Türkiye–Indonesia relations. Despite the geographical distance between the two countries and the apparent differences in their regional contexts, the evolving bilateral relationship reveals a pattern of cooperation marked by shared historical narratives, strategic aspirations, mutual development goals, and increasing people-to-people contact.

The roots of Turkish-Indonesian relations can be traced back to the 16th century, during the classical period of the Ottoman Empire. The Aceh Sultanate, located in the northern region of present-day Sumatra, was under considerable pressure from Portuguese colonial forces attempting to dominate the spice trade in the region. In response, the sultans of Aceh reached out to the Ottoman Empire, seeking military, technical, and spiritual assistance. Archival records from the Ottoman period—held today by the Presidential State Archives of Türkiye—include royal correspondences, orders for weapon shipments, and accounts of military advisors dispatched to Aceh. These documents not only illustrate the depth of interaction between the two powers but also reflect the pan-Islamic identity fostered by the Ottomans across the broader Muslim world.

This historical connection has been the subject of various scholarly studies in Türkiye, particularly by researchers such as İsmail Hakkı Gürsoy and Ahmet Kurtulmuş. Scholars have emphasized that the Ottoman–Aceh alliance served as an early example of Muslim solidarity against European colonialism, and that it left a lasting cultural imprint in Southeast Asia. Oral traditions and historical narratives in Indonesian societies continue to refer to “Turks” (Turki) in a positive, sometimes ancestral light—especially in the folklore of royal genealogies tracing their origin back to Turkestan. These narratives, although often symbolic, demonstrate the historical depth of the bilateral relationship.

The colonial period saw a decline in direct relations due to European dominance in the Indonesian archipelago. Nevertheless, following Indonesia’s struggle for independence and its recognition as a sovereign state in 1949, diplomatic ties with Türkiye were re-established. In 1950, both countries established formal diplomatic relations, opening embassies in Ankara and Jakarta shortly thereafter. This period coincided with significant changes in the global order, as newly independent states sought alliances based on mutual respect, non-alignment, and shared colonial experiences.

Türkiye, positioning itself as a modernizing republic with secular governance and Islamic cultural heritage, saw in Indonesia a like-minded partner in the Global South. Diplomatic exchanges gained momentum during the Cold War, when both nations participated in international organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement. Although their foreign policies occasionally diverged, both Ankara and Jakarta maintained a consistent level of bilateral engagement.

Indonesia’s strategic location in Southeast Asia and its role as a founding member of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) contribute to its importance in Türkiye’s evolving Asia policy. Under the “Asia Anew” (Yeniden Asya) initiative launched by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2019, Türkiye began intensifying its diplomatic, economic, and cultural activities in the broader Asia-Pacific region. In this context, Indonesia is seen not only as a key partner in Southeast Asia but also as a potential bridge for Türkiye’s deeper engagement with ASEAN countries.

Conversely, Türkiye represents for Indonesia a gateway to Central Asia, the Balkans, and the European Union markets. Türkiye's unique geostrategic position between Europe and Asia, along with its growing economic and technological capabilities, offers Indonesia opportunities for expanding its diplomatic and commercial reach.

One of the most dynamic dimensions of Turkish-Indonesian relations is economic cooperation. In recent decades, trade volume between the two countries has increased significantly, particularly in sectors such as construction, energy, automotive, textiles, and consumer goods. Turkish construction firms have actively participated in infrastructure development projects in Indonesia, including airport modernization, energy plant construction, and urban development.

Both countries have signed bilateral agreements aimed at promoting investment protection, avoiding double taxation, and facilitating economic cooperation. Additionally, joint business councils and intergovernmental commissions regularly convene to discuss trade barriers, customs harmonization, and technology transfer. While a comprehensive free trade agreement has yet to be finalized, negotiations are ongoing under the broader framework of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

A key component of the bilateral relationship is the growth of educational and cultural exchange programs. Since 1992, over 1,000 Indonesian students have received government-funded scholarships from Türkiye. As of June 2023, there are 4,600 Indonesian students studying in Türkiye at various levels, including language courses, high schools, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs. These students contribute to the multicultural academic environment in Türkiye and, upon returning home, often play important roles in fostering bilateral understanding. Student organizations such as the Indonesian Students Association in Türkiye (PPI Turki) and Indonesian alumni networks are active in promoting cultural integration, academic collaboration, and civil diplomacy. Turkish universities have also begun offering programs in Asian studies, Islam in Southeast Asia, and Indonesian language and culture, further strengthening academic linkages.

Another notable dimension of Turkish-Indonesian relations is the sphere of humanitarian assistance. Both countries are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and floods. The Turkish government, through agencies such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay), has provided rapid aid to Indonesia during major natural catastrophes, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake. Similarly, Indonesia has shown solidarity with Türkiye by sending rescue teams and humanitarian aid during crises such as the 2023 earthquakes in eastern Anatolia. This reciprocal humanitarian diplomacy serves as a strong foundation for trust-building and people-to-people empathy. It also highlights the increasing role of non-traditional security issues in shaping bilateral cooperation.

Bilateral relations have also been enhanced through acts of symbolic diplomacy. In 2021, the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality renamed a street in Çankaya District, where the Indonesian Embassy is located, after Ahmed Sukarno, Indonesia's founding president. The street had previously been named "Holland," a symbolic gesture referring to Indonesia's former colonial oppressor. Similarly, in Jakarta, a prominent street was renamed after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. These actions reflect mutual appreciation and a shared historical experience of anti-colonial resistance and nation-building. In addition, both countries commemorate diplomatic anniversaries through cultural festivals, academic conferences, and exchange exhibitions. These events serve as instruments of soft power and reinforce cultural diplomacy as a crucial element of bilateral engagement.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides regular advisories for citizens traveling to Indonesia, emphasizing awareness of natural disasters, changing climate conditions, and health regulations. In addition, travelers are warned about Indonesia's strict penalties for drug trafficking, which can include capital punishment. These consular measures reflect the importance of security cooperation and information-sharing between the two governments in protecting their citizens.

Despite the increase in bilateral activities, academic studies specifically focusing on Türkiye-Indonesia relations remain limited. Most Turkish scholarship on Indonesia has concentrated on the country's domestic politics, Islamic movements, democratization process, and economic development. Important collections such as Türkiye's Indonesia Studies I and II, published by Ankara University's Asia-Pacific Studies Application and Research Center, have broadened the academic interest in Indonesia but have not comprehensively addressed bilateral relations.

Furthermore, a search in the Turkish Higher Education Council's National Thesis Center reveals over 100 theses related to Indonesia, but few focus directly on the history, structure, and implications of Türkiye-Indonesia relations. This scarcity underscores the relevance and necessity of the present study, which relies on archival sources to trace the full scope of the bilateral relationship.

This study is methodologically grounded in qualitative document analysis. The primary sources include diplomatic correspondences, ministerial directives, presidential decrees, and parliamentary records obtained from: The State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye (Resmî Gazete). By examining these sources, the study maps the chronology of Türkiye-Indonesia relations, identifies critical turning points, and analyzes patterns of cooperation, tension, and mutual assistance.

As global geopolitics increasingly shift toward a multipolar international order, characterized by the relative decline of unipolar dominance and the emergence of multiple centers of power, middle powers such as Türkiye and Indonesia are assuming increasingly significant roles in shaping regional and global dynamics. Although neither country qualifies as a great power in the traditional sense, both possess considerable diplomatic flexibility, economic capacity, and normative influence that enable them to contribute meaningfully to regional stability, development initiatives, and multilateral cooperation.

Türkiye's unique geopolitical position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, combined with Indonesia's status as the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy located in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region, provides both countries with distinctive opportunities to act as bridges between different geopolitical spheres. In this context, Türkiye and Indonesia are increasingly positioned to promote South-South cooperation, facilitate intercultural dialogue, and support pluralistic norms within international institutions. The deepening of Türkiye-Indonesia relations therefore reflects not only bilateral interests but also a broader pattern of cooperation among emerging middle powers in the evolving architecture of global governance.