



The Role Of Developing Countries In Global Conflict Mediation: A Comparative Study Of Indonesia And Turkiye

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ABSTRACT

Research Aims: This study examines the comparative mediation roles of Indonesia and Turkiye as emerging middle powers in international conflict resolution. It aims to understand how both states construct their identities as mediators, what strategies and motivations underpin their diplomacy, and how domestic and external factors shape their mediation effectiveness.

Design/methodology/approach: Using a qualitative comparative case study design, the research analyzes secondary data from academic journal articles, policy reports, official documents, and credible news sources. Thematic analysis identifies patterns across five dimensions: mediator characteristics, strategies, motivations, contextual factors, and outcomes. The cases include Indonesia's mediation in the Moro conflict, the Rohingya crisis, and its advocacy for Middle East peace, as well as Turkiye's mediation in Somalia, the Syria-Israel negotiations, and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Research Findings: The findings reveal that Indonesia employs a normative and multilateral mediation style, emphasizing facilitation, legitimacy, and consensus-building through ASEAN and the OIC. In contrast, Turkiye adopts a more assertive and pragmatic approach, combining humanitarian diplomacy with material leverage and strategic balancing. Both models demonstrate that middle powers can shape peace processes without coercive force, though each faces structural and contextual constraints.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality: The study contributes to the literature on middle-power diplomacy and conflict mediation by illustrating two complementary pathways of Indonesia's normative legitimacy and Turkiye's strategic assertiveness as distinct yet effective models for emerging states engaging in peace diplomacy.

Keywords: Indonesia, Türkiye, conflict mediation, middle power diplomacy, qualitative comparative analysis.

Introduction

In recent decades, the field of international conflict mediation has been dominated by major powers such as the United States, the European Union, and multilateral organizations like the United Nations, which have long functioned as the principal brokers of peace processes. This dominance has contributed to a perception that effective mediation requires structural power, military influence, or global reach. However, recent developments indicate a notable shift where several developing countries, most prominently Indonesia and Türkiye are emerging as significant mediators in international and regional conflicts. This transformation challenges the long-standing hierarchy of diplomatic authority, opening new theoretical and empirical questions about how developing states acquire legitimacy and agency in peace diplomacy.

Despite the growing attention to middle-power diplomacy, existing scholarship remains largely centered on Western or global-north mediators, with limited comparative analysis of mediation by Global South actors. While studies have acknowledged Indonesia's "independent and active" (bebas dan aktif) foreign policy and Türkiye's "zero problems with neighbors" principle, these discussions tend to treat them as isolated national experiences rather than as part of a broader shift in global mediation dynamics (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023; Yeşiltaş & Balcı, 2019). As a result, the literature still lacks an integrated framework explaining how developing states use mediation both as a foreign policy instrument and as a means of constructing international identity. This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing Indonesia and Türkiye not merely as case studies of mediation, but as representative examples of developing countries redefining their diplomatic agency in a changing global order.

Mediation, as both a political act and a normative gesture, offers developing states unique opportunities. It enhances international prestige, projects soft power, and strengthens domestic legitimacy. For Indonesia, mediation reflects its historical commitment to non-alignment and peaceful engagement. The doctrine of "independent and active" foreign policy remains a guiding principle, enabling Jakarta to act as an impartial broker in disputes such as the Israel–Palestine conflict and to champion global mediation mechanisms, as evidenced by its endorsement of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (ANTARA, 2025). Through these actions, Indonesia performs a dual role, maintaining



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its moral identity as a peace-promoting nation and positioning itself as a credible regional leader within ASEAN and the Global South.

Türkiye, by contrast, articulates its mediation identity through a more assertive regional diplomacy rooted in the “zero problems with neighbors” doctrine. Initially designed to stabilize relations with neighboring states, this approach evolved into a proactive model of conflict resolution emphasizing cultural proximity and shared identity. Türkiye’s willingness to mediate in conflicts such as Gaza, Syria, and Ukraine illustrates a strategy that combines pragmatic diplomacy with religious and historical legitimacy. Its mediation initiatives often framed as alternatives to Western interventions, reaffirm its ambition to become a bridge between East and West and a moral voice in the Muslim world (Anadolu Agency, 2023; A News Türkiye, 2024).

Both Indonesia and Türkiye utilize soft power as the cornerstone of their mediation efforts, relying on cultural diplomacy, religious solidarity, and regional identity rather than coercive force. Indonesia’s non-aligned tradition, combined with its leadership within the Muslim and ASEAN communities, underpins its credibility as a neutral peace broker. Türkiye similarly leverages its Ottoman heritage, linguistic and cultural ties with Turkic states, and institutional engagement in Islamic organizations to build diplomatic acceptance. Yet, despite these similarities, their approaches are shaped by distinct domestic and structural dynamics, ranging from economic capacity and political ideology to public opinion and relations with major powers. Comparative analysis of these differences provides critical insight into the broader conditions enabling or constraining mediation by developing countries.

This comparative perspective highlights a key theoretical problem insufficiently addressed in prior research about how do developing states construct and sustain the legitimacy of their mediation roles in the absence of structural power? Existing studies on middle powers often emphasize material capability or strategic alignment, but they rarely consider how identity, norms, and domestic politics interact to shape mediation strategies. A constructivist lens focusing on how states define themselves through socially constructed meanings and normative commitments offers a useful entry point. For both Indonesia and Türkiye, mediation is not only a diplomatic function but also a performative act of identity construction, through which each state articulates its role as a responsible and peace-oriented actor within its regional and religious communities.

This research, therefore, fills a conceptual and empirical void by systematically comparing Indonesia and Türkiye’s mediation strategies as cases of developing-



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country diplomacy. It investigates how these states negotiate legitimacy in international forums, mobilize cultural and religious narratives, and balance domestic political imperatives with global normative expectations. The analysis pays particular attention to how structural external pressures such as great-power competition and geopolitical tensions interact with internal factors like institutional capacity, leadership ideology, and national identity to shape mediation outcomes. Through this lens, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Global South's agency in international peacebuilding.

The novelty of this research lies in its dual contribution. Theoretically, it advances the literature on middle-power and Global South diplomacy by integrating constructivist insights into the study of mediation, emphasizing how identity and norms function as sources of diplomatic power. Empirically, it provides a comparative account of two influential yet understudied mediators, Indonesia and Türkiye whose strategies illuminate the diverse pathways through which developing states seek recognition and influence in global conflict resolution. Rather than treating these cases as exceptional, the research conceptualizes them as indicative of a broader transformation in international relations in the form of a gradual pluralization of mediation beyond the traditional great-power paradigm.

To guide this inquiry, the study will explain the way of Indonesia and Türkiye construct, legitimize, and operationalize their roles as mediators in international conflicts, and the evolving nature of developing-country diplomacy. Accordingly, the main objectives of this study are to analyze how Indonesia and Türkiye define and perform their mediation roles within their respective regional and international contexts, to examine the domestic, normative, and structural factors influencing these mediation efforts and to identify the theoretical implications of their experiences for understanding Global South diplomacy and the reconfiguration of global mediation practices. By situating the comparative analysis within this conceptual and empirical framework, the study seeks to contribute to the expanding debate on how emerging powers reshape the norms and practices of international peace mediation.

Literature Review

Integrating Theories of Mediation and Middle-Power Diplomacy

Conflict mediation and middle-power diplomacy represent two intersecting strands of international relations theory that illuminate how developing and emerging states exercise agency in global politics. Traditional mediation theory, as articulated by



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Bercovitch and Jackson (2009), emphasizes the role of a neutral third party that facilitates communication and proposes solutions to conflicting parties. Yet, contemporary scholarship has extended this understanding by recognizing mediation not merely as a technical mechanism, but as a strategic and identity-building process through which states cultivate influence and legitimacy (Greig & Diehl, 2012; Svensson & Wallensteen, 2010). This evolution of mediation theory opens fertile ground for examining how middle powers states that lack coercive dominance yet possess diplomatic capability employ mediation as a form of soft power and norm entrepreneurship.

Middle-power diplomacy theory emerged from the observation that certain states, though lacking material might, could still shape international outcomes through coalition-building, persuasion, and moral authority (Cooper et al., 1993; Jordaan, 2003). More recent interpretations position middle powers as “connectors” and “facilitators” that seek to stabilize regional orders through dialogue rather than confrontation (Ping, 2021; Park, 2019). However, the nexus between mediation and middle-power diplomacy has not been fully synthesized in the literature. The analytical bridge lies in recognizing that both share a relational logic where they derive power not from dominance but from recognition, legitimacy, and trust (Fawcett, 2022; Hwang, 2023). This perspective situates mediation as a practical expression of middle-power diplomacy, where states project influence through moral credibility and institutional engagement rather than coercion.

The literature suggests that mediation serves dual purposes: normative and strategic. Normatively, it allows states to demonstrate commitment to peace, international law, and humanitarian values (Beardsley et al., 2006; Wallensteen & Svensson, 2014). Strategically, it enhances soft power and positions the mediator as a moral leader within its region. In this sense, Indonesia and Türkiye exemplify two distinct but complementary models of developing-state mediation. Indonesia operationalizes mediation as part of its “independent and active” (bebas dan aktif) doctrine, using it to affirm its non-aligned identity and leadership within ASEAN and the Muslim world (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023; Susilawati et al., 2025). Türkiye, meanwhile, integrates mediation into its proactive regional diplomacy, what Yeşiltaş and Balcı (2019) describe as “strategic humanitarianism” which combines humanitarian aid with geopolitical engagement.

Recent research expands this debate by emphasizing that developing-country mediators often derive legitimacy from shared identity and moral narratives rather



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than structural power (Karim, 2020; Baser & Öztürk, 2021). For instance, Indonesia's credibility in the Moro and Palestine peace processes rests on its consistent support for Muslim solidarity and non-interference principles. Türkiye's mediation between Russia and Ukraine in the Black Sea Grain Initiative similarly illustrates the strategic use of soft power by leveraging trust with both NATO and Moscow to broker humanitarian outcomes (Eralp, 2023). These examples confirm Bercovitch's (2011) contention that successful mediation depends less on neutrality per se than on perceived legitimacy, empathy, and the ability to balance competing expectations.

Comparative Lessons from Other Emerging Mediators

Beyond Indonesia and Türkiye, several other emerging powers have used mediation to expand their diplomatic profile. For example, Qatar and South Africa have pursued mediation as a tool of foreign policy legitimation and regional influence. Doha's active engagement in the Taliban-U.S. negotiations positioned it as a credible broker between Western and Islamic actors (Ulrichsen, 2020), while South Africa's role in Sudan and Burundi peace processes exemplifies postcolonial mediation grounded in reconciliation discourse (Nathan, 2021). These cases underline a key comparative insight where developing mediators often rely on moral authority and identity-driven narratives rather than material inducements.

This pattern aligns with the conceptualization of "emerging middle powers" (Jordaan, 2003), who deploy diplomacy as a compensatory strategy for limited hard power. Comparative literature (e.g., Lee, 2022; Karim, 2024) indicates that these mediators often face a paradox where they gain legitimacy through moral positioning but encounter limits when great-power interests dominate. Thus, Indonesia and Türkiye's mediation efforts must be understood within this structural constraint that is their ability to facilitate dialogue often depends on whether they are perceived as neutral enough to be trusted and powerful enough to be effective.

Toward a Conceptual Framework of Developing-State Mediation

Drawing on the synthesis of conflict mediation theory and middle-power diplomacy, this study proposes a conceptual framework connecting mediator characteristics, strategies, motivations, and outcomes. First, mediator characteristics including capability, credibility, legitimacy, and resources (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009) that form the foundation. Capability refers to institutional and diplomatic expertise; credibility to perceived neutrality; legitimacy to normative or institutional recognition; and resources to the availability of economic or political leverage.



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Second, strategies vary across facilitative, formulative, and manipulative approaches. Indonesia primarily adopts facilitation and formulation, reflecting its non-coercive, consensus-driven diplomacy. Türkiye, by contrast, combines formulation and manipulation, leveraging its military and economic assets alongside humanitarian narratives (DeRouen et al., 2011; Eralp, 2023).

Third, motivations for mediation intertwine normative commitment and pragmatic interests. Developing mediators often seek prestige, regional leadership, or identity affirmation while maintaining alignment with their foreign policy doctrines (Weatherbee, 2019; Hwang, 2023). Finally, outcomes encompass not only immediate conflict resolution but also long-term legitimacy gains and identity consolidation.

By integrating these dimensions, the framework enables a more holistic understanding of how mediation functions as both a diplomatic tool and an identity performance for middle powers. It underscores that mediation success depends not merely on power asymmetry or neutrality but on how effectively a state aligns its normative claims with strategic capacities.

Contemporary research increasingly emphasizes the hybrid nature of Global South mediation. Karim (2024) and Eralp (2023) note that emerging mediators such as Türkiye and Indonesia operate in a “dual space” where they balance moral positioning with pragmatic diplomacy. Fawcett (2022) similarly argues that Global South mediation reflects a new “normative pluralism,” in which states assert their own regional moral orders distinct from Western liberal peace models. This trend is also evident in the growing scholarship on soft-power mediation, where cultural diplomacy, humanitarianism, and religion serve as sources of influence (Hwang, 2023; Özkan, 2022). These studies collectively indicate that mediation by developing countries represents a reconfiguration of global peace governance rather than a mere replication of Western practices.

To visualize this synthesis, the following conceptual model can be incorporated as a table:



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Mediator Characteristics	Mediation Strategies	Motivations	Outcomes
Capability, credibility, legitimacy, resources	Facilitation, formulation, manipulation	Prestige, identity, regional leadership, normative commitment	Conflict settlement, legitimacy gain, identity reinforcement, expanded influence

This model illustrates the dynamic relationship between who the mediator is, how they act, why they act, and what results follow, providing a framework for analyzing Indonesia and Türkiye as comparative cases within the broader category of emerging mediators.

In synthesizing mediation and middle-power theories, this literature review situates Indonesia and Türkiye within a new wave of Global South peace diplomacy characterized by hybrid motivations and identity-driven strategies. Their experiences reveal that mediation is not only a functional practice but also a means of performing middle-power status. The analytical framework developed here bridges theory and empirical reality, offering a foundation for the comparative analysis in the next section.

Method

This research employs a qualitative comparative case study approach to examine and interpret the mediation roles of Indonesia and Türkiye in regional and international conflicts. While this approach is informed by established qualitative research frameworks (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), its application here is specifically tailored to uncover how these two emerging middle powers construct, perform, and legitimize their diplomatic identities through mediation. The comparative case study design enables the exploration of both commonalities and contextual distinctions in their mediation practices, making it suitable for theory-building and conceptual refinement in the study of Global South diplomacy.

Research Design and Implementation

The comparative case study approach was implemented through a two-stage design. In the first stage, each country was analyzed individually to map its mediation history, policy rationale, and institutional mechanisms. This stage focused on identifying the internal and external factors that shape each state's mediation



strategy – such as foreign policy doctrines, regional alignments, and leadership styles. In the second stage, findings from each case were systematically compared across predefined analytical dimensions (see below). This process enabled the researcher to identify convergences (shared norms, similar soft-power tools) and divergences (differences in strategic approach, legitimacy sources, and geopolitical orientation) between Indonesia and Türkiye.

The comparative framework was structured around four analytical dimensions derived from both mediation and middle-power diplomacy literature:

1. Motivations (why each country engages in mediation),
2. Strategies (how mediation is conducted in practice),
3. Resources and Constraints (what material and normative capacities enable or limit mediation), and
4. Outcomes (the diplomatic and reputational effects of mediation efforts).
These variables guided data collection, coding, and analysis to ensure analytical coherence and comparability across cases.

Data Collection Techniques

The study relied on secondary data obtained from multiple credible and triangulated sources. These included peer-reviewed academic articles (2010–2025), official policy documents from the Indonesian and Turkish Ministries of Foreign Affairs, United Nations and ASEAN reports, and reputable media outlets such as *Reuters*, *Al Jazeera*, and *Anadolu Agency*. Academic publications provided theoretical insights and empirical case analyses; government and institutional sources offered first-hand accounts of mediation practices and official statements; while credible journalistic materials contextualized real-time diplomatic developments. Data selection followed three criteria:

1. Relevance: the source directly discussed mediation, diplomacy, or foreign policy of either country;
2. Credibility: preference was given to peer-reviewed or institutional publications; and
3. Timeliness: emphasis was placed on materials published between 2010 and 2025 to reflect contemporary mediation patterns.



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This multi-source approach enhanced the reliability and representativeness of the evidence base.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, operationalized in a transparent and systematic manner.

1. Familiarization: All collected texts were read multiple times to identify initial impressions and recurring patterns related to mediation behavior and foreign policy narratives.
2. Initial Coding: Segments of data were coded using keywords such as "neutrality," "soft power," "regional leadership," "religious legitimacy," and "strategic autonomy."
3. Theme Development: Codes were clustered into broader themes—such as *normative mediation*, *strategic mediation*, *soft-power diplomacy*, and *identity construction*.
4. Theme Review: Themes were refined to ensure internal consistency and distinctiveness. For instance, "normative mediation" emerged from Indonesia's references to peace, impartiality, and global justice, whereas "strategic mediation" described Türkiye's use of mediation for geopolitical positioning.
5. Theme Definition: Each theme was defined with clear inclusion criteria, allowing for systematic cross-case comparison.
6. Reporting: The final themes were synthesized into an interpretive narrative connecting the empirical findings to theoretical constructs of middle-power diplomacy and mediation theory.

To enhance validity and reliability, the study adopted triangulation and cross-checking techniques. Data were triangulated across academic, policy, and media sources to verify the consistency of interpretations. Contradictory or ambiguous information was cross-referenced against multiple independent publications to reduce bias.

Comparative Analysis Structure

The final comparative stage followed a matrix-based analysis aligning the four analytical dimensions (motivations, strategies, resources, outcomes) across the two cases. Each dimension was systematically coded and evaluated to identify similarities



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and contrasts. For example, both Indonesia and Türkiye employ mediation as soft power, but Indonesia emphasizes normative legitimacy through ASEAN and the OIC, while Türkiye leverages geopolitical influence and humanitarian diplomacy. By structuring the analysis through this matrix, the study reveals how shared characteristics of middle-power diplomacy manifest differently under distinct political and institutional environments.

Result and Discussion

The mediation and diplomatic initiatives of Indonesia and Türkiye reveal how Bercovitch's (2009) conflict mediation theory and Jordaan's (2003) middle-power framework intersect in practice. Bercovitch conceptualizes mediation as a dynamic process shaped by contextual, relational, and strategic variables where mediator characteristics (credibility, legitimacy, capability, resources) influence outcomes more than formal power. Jordaan, conversely, argues that middle powers use diplomacy as a compensatory mechanism to exercise influence despite structural limitations. When these two perspectives are combined, mediation emerges as both a practical technique of conflict management and a symbolic performance of middle-power identity.

Both Indonesia and Türkiye operationalize mediation not merely as conflict resolution but as a strategic expression of status, legitimacy, and identity. Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy doctrine embodies Bercovitch's notion of legitimacy-based mediation where moral authority substitutes for coercive leverage—while Türkiye's activist diplomacy aligns with Bercovitch's strategic mediation, where mediators use tactical incentives, resources, and relationships to shape negotiations. As Jordaan (2003) suggests, middle powers can be either "traditional" (normative and institutionally oriented) or "emerging" (pragmatic and assertive). Indonesia's cautious multilateralism places it in the first category, while Türkiye's assertive humanitarian diplomacy typifies the latter.

Indonesia's Mediation Roles through a Theoretical Lens

The Moro Peace Process: Mediation as Normative Legitimacy

Indonesia's mediation in the Moro conflict from 1993 to 1996 exemplifies Bercovitch's model of facilitative mediation, where a mediator relies on legitimacy, neutrality, and trust-building rather than coercion. As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and a neighboring Muslim-majority country, Indonesia was perceived as a neutral yet empathetic actor. Ambassador Wiryono Sastrohandoyo's approach emphasized "quiet, consistent dialogue rather than



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dramatic intervention,” reflecting Indonesia’s adherence to ASEAN’s consensus-based diplomacy (Flores et al., 2019, p. 74).

By achieving the 1996 Final Peace Agreement, Indonesia demonstrated what Bercovitch (2011) calls a “context-sensitive” mediation outcome—where success depends on balancing the expectations of conflicting parties with the mediator’s legitimacy. The institutionalization of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the integration of MNLF fighters into state forces were durable results of Indonesia’s credibility, not coercion. Jordaan’s framework helps explain why: Indonesia’s mediation was less about maximizing material gain than projecting an image of regional stewardship, a defining feature of a normative middle power (Shekhar, 2022).

However, limitations soon emerged. The sustainability of the peace depended on Philippine domestic politics and internal MNLF cohesion—factors beyond Indonesia’s control. As one Filipino negotiator later noted, “Indonesia could bring us to the table, but could not guarantee what happened after” (cited in Alunaza & Anggara, 2018, p. 57). This underscores Bercovitch’s caution that mediation outcomes rely on third-party legitimacy, not third-party enforcement.

Rohingya and Myanmar Crisis: Humanitarian Mediation

Indonesia’s engagement in the Rohingya crisis (2017–2024) highlights a transformation from traditional mediation toward hybrid humanitarian diplomacy. Guided by Bercovitch’s principle of contextual adaptation, Indonesia’s Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi employed a “Formula 4+1” approach—addressing security, humanitarian access, repatriation, and dialogue (Setiawan & Hamka, 2020). This approach operationalized what Jordaan (2003) calls “constructive multilateralism”—a strategy where a middle power aligns moral values with institutional leadership.

Indonesia’s “soft” diplomacy was reinforced by non-state actors. As one NGO representative expressed, “Indonesia’s response was both governmental and societal with civil groups filled where ASEAN institutions hesitated” (quoted in Sundari et al., 2021, p. 213). This hybrid diplomacy enhanced legitimacy but faced external limits: ASEAN’s non-interference principle constrained stronger action, illustrating Bercovitch’s (2011) warning that institutional norms can restrict mediator flexibility. Still, Indonesia’s persistent shuttle diplomacy under its 2023 ASEAN chairmanship reaffirmed its identity as a moral and regional leader (Marlina et al., 2024).

Palestine and Middle East Advocacy: Identity and Symbolism



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Indonesia's longstanding advocacy for Palestine represents symbolic mediation, a form where diplomacy becomes an identity performance (Fajriyah & Setiawati, 2024). Even without direct negotiation roles, Indonesia mobilizes the moral capital of its anti-colonial history to act as a "voice of justice" in the Global South. In Bercovitch's terms, this is normative mediation, where influence derives from shared values rather than proximity to conflict. This aligns precisely with Jordaan's concept of the "traditional middle power," which uses norm entrepreneurship rather than coercive instruments. Indonesia's consistent call at the UN for ceasefires and humanitarian access, and its refusal to normalize relations with Israel until Palestine gains sovereignty, underscore its dedication to principle over expediency (Muhamad, 2024). Yet, this approach also reveals constraints: Indonesia's influence is largely discursive and moral rather than operational. As one analyst observed, "Indonesia speaks with moral clarity but limited material leverage" (Setiawati, 2024, p. 145).

Türkiye's Mediation Roles through a Theoretical Lens

Somalia: Humanitarian Diplomacy and Strategic Mediation

Türkiye's multidimensional engagement in Somalia since 2011 epitomizes Bercovitch's manipulative mediation, where the mediator combines material incentives with normative appeal. By providing direct aid, infrastructure, and training, Türkiye "merged compassion with strategy" (Stearns & Sucuoglu, 2017, p. 88). This aligns with Jordaan's concept of an emerging middle power where a state leveraging material capability to reinforce legitimacy. Turkish agencies such as TIKA and AFAD exemplify multi-track diplomacy, integrating state, business, and civil society actors to build sustainable partnerships (Akpınar, 2013). However, critics note that Türkiye's strong executive approach "risked reinforcing elite-centric governance in Somalia" (Altunışık, 2022, p. 512). This tension mirrors Bercovitch's argument that mediators using incentives must guard against dependency and perceived bias. Still, Türkiye's model achieved tangible results: revitalization of infrastructure, increased governance capacity, and an enduring Turkish presence in Africa. As one Somali official acknowledged, "Unlike others, Türkiye stayed after the cameras left" (quoted in Sazak & Woods, 2017, p. 14). The Somali case thus demonstrates mediation as **strategic humanitarianism** – a balance between altruism and influence.

Syria-Israel Talks: High-Visibility Regional Mediation

The 2008 Syria-Israel negotiations illustrate how Türkiye applied its bridge diplomacy to regional disputes. Hosting indirect talks, Türkiye used its unique dual



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credibility with Damascus and Jerusalem (Aras, 2008). This aligns with Bercovitch's formulative mediation, where the mediator structures discussions and proposes compromises. Yet, as Bercovitch (2011) emphasizes, external shocks can derail even skillful mediation. The Gaza offensive and political turnover ended the talks, revealing the fragility of middle-power mediation in geopolitically charged contexts. From Jordaan's perspective, this case demonstrates the vulnerability of emerging middle powers that rely on personalistic diplomacy and narrow windows of opportunity. Türkiye's approach projected high visibility and short-term prestige but lacked institutional insulation against shifts in regional dynamics. The lesson, therefore, is that status-seeking diplomacy can deliver symbolic gains but risks credibility when outcomes falter.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Pragmatic Balancing and Functional Mediation

Türkiye's mediation in the Russia-Ukraine war since 2022 showcases the integration of geostrategic realism and humanitarian pragmatism. By maintaining relations with both sides, Türkiye fulfilled Bercovitch's (2011) criterion of "situational adaptability." Hosting talks in Antalya and İstanbul and brokering the Black Sea Grain Initiative exemplified a hybrid strategy of facilitation and manipulation (Wódka, 2023). The Istanbul agreement's success confirmed that middle powers can deliver functional peace dividends even amid great-power rivalry. President Erdoğan's declaration that "peace is built not by taking sides but by building bridges" (Anadolu Agency, 2023) epitomizes Türkiye's performative neutrality. Yet, Jordaan's theory warns of overextension: Türkiye's mediation yielded tactical gains but exposed strategic limits. Dependence on Russian energy, domestic economic vulnerabilities, and alliance contradictions with NATO constrained Türkiye's longer-term diplomatic maneuvering (Alkan, 2023; Tulun, 2024).

Comparative Dynamics and Theoretical Integration

The comparative analysis reveals that Indonesia and Türkiye embody two complementary archetypes within Bercovitch's and Jordaan's frameworks:

Table 1. Comparative Analysis Between Indonesia and Türkiye in Mediating International Conflicts



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Dimension	Indonesia (Normative Middle Power)	Türkiye (Emerging Pragmatic Middle Power)
Mediation Type	Facilitative / Normative (credibility, neutrality, legitimacy)	Manipulative / Formulative (incentives, leverage, visibility)
Key Theoretical Lens (Bercovitch)	Legitimacy-based mediation	Capability and resource-based mediation
Middle Power Type (Jordaan)	Traditional (rule-based, multilateral, non-coercive)	Emerging (assertive, interest-driven, hybrid soft-hard power)
Motivations	Stability, ASEAN centrality, sovereignty, moral leadership	Strategic autonomy, regional influence, status recognition
Strengths	Institutional legitimacy, moral authority, ASEAN leadership	Strategic geography, multi-domain diplomacy, material capability
Limitations	Limited hard power, bureaucratic inertia, non-interference norms	Domestic politicization, inconsistent neutrality, alliance contradictions
Outcomes	Durable normative influence, soft-power legitimacy	Tactical mediation successes, high visibility but fluctuating credibility

While this table visually summarizes differences, its deeper analytical value lies in showing how the two states operationalize distinct logics of mediation. Indonesia's approach aligns with Bercovitch's normative mediation, where trust and legitimacy are the primary tools, and with Jordaan's traditional middle power, where influence stems from moral authority and institution-building. Türkiye, by contrast, reflects strategic mediation by leveraging resources, networks, visibility and embodies



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Jordaan's emerging middle power, which employs pragmatic and transactional methods. Analytically, this comparison demonstrates that mediation effectiveness does not correlate linearly with power resources but with contextual fit between strategy, identity, and the conflict environment. Indonesia's legitimacy-centered model thrives in protracted, norm-sensitive conflicts, while Türkiye's agility suits high-pressure crises requiring rapid intervention. In Bercovitch's terms, Indonesia maximizes "process legitimacy," whereas Türkiye optimizes "outcome visibility."

Including data excerpts strengthens interpretive credibility. For instance, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi remarked during the ASEAN Summit (2023): "Our diplomacy for peace does not shout – it works quietly, but persistently." This reflects Indonesia's preference for facilitative mediation and normative persuasion. Similarly, a Turkish diplomat stated about the Ukraine initiative: "Our mediation is not altruism – it is stability through engagement" (Tulun, 2024, p. 6), encapsulating Türkiye's strategic pragmatism. Secondary sources reinforce these findings. According to Wódka (2023), "Türkiye's mediation style is opportunistic yet indispensable – it fills the vacuum left by major powers unwilling to take risks" (p. 101). Meanwhile, Shekhar (2022) observes that "Indonesia's quiet diplomacy sustains ASEAN's moral center even when its material influence lags behind" (p. 212). These quotations substantiate the theoretical claim that mediation by middle powers represents both moral positioning and strategic necessity.

Critical Reflections: Structural and Domestic Constraints

Indonesia's Constraints

Despite its normative legitimacy, Indonesia faces several constraints that limit the depth of its mediation impact. First, institutional inertia within ASEAN, particularly the principle of non-interference reduces flexibility in crises such as Myanmar (Marlina et al., 2024). Second, Indonesia's limited coercive capacity restricts its ability to enforce compliance or sustain post-agreement monitoring. Third, domestic political shifts occasionally divert attention from foreign policy leadership. For example, during electoral cycles, international mediation receives reduced bureaucratic focus, reflecting the domestic-external trade-off typical of middle powers (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023). Moreover, Indonesia's mediation is vulnerable to geopolitical overshadowing by major powers. Its non-aligned stance, while morally credible, sometimes results in limited access to leverage in conflicts dominated by great-power competition. As a senior Indonesian diplomat noted, "Our moral voice is strong, but it echoes best where the great powers are silent" (quoted in Setiawati, 2024, p. 146).



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Türkiye's Constraints

Türkiye's activism, though effective in producing visible outcomes, is constrained by domestic political instrumentalization and external strategic contradictions. The blending of foreign policy with domestic electoral narratives such as portraying mediation successes as symbols of national pride can undermine credibility abroad (Kutlay, 2021). Its NATO membership simultaneously enhances institutional access and constrains independent maneuvering. The delicate balance between maintaining ties with Russia and supporting Ukraine exposes Türkiye to strategic vulnerability (Alkan, 2023). Furthermore, Türkiye's assertive mediation style occasionally blurs the line between facilitation and influence-seeking, raising concerns about neutrality. As Eralp (2023) notes, "Türkiye's mediation rests on balancing empathy and ambition – when ambition dominates, credibility suffers" (p. 118). These challenges affirm Bercovitch's caution that mediators who over-personalize diplomacy risk losing trust, while Jordaan's typology predicts volatility among emerging middle powers navigating great-power politics.

Broader Implications for Middle-Power Mediation

The comparative synthesis offers three key insights for theory and policy:

1. Complementary Mediation Models

Indonesia and Türkiye represent two viable yet contrasting pathways for Global South mediation. Indonesia institutionalizes normative continuity, while Türkiye exemplifies pragmatic responsiveness. Both demonstrate that middle-power diplomacy is not monolithic but adaptive to context.

2. Legitimacy as Power Currency

Echoing Bercovitch's model, legitimacy whether derived from moral authority (Indonesia) or performance credibility (Türkiye) is the essential resource enabling mediation beyond material capability.

3. Institutionalization vs. Agility Trade-off

Indonesia's embeddedness in ASEAN and multilateral frameworks secures long-term legitimacy but slows decision-making. Türkiye's flexible, bilateral approach yields rapid results but risks inconsistency. The balance between these tendencies reflects Jordaan's distinction between traditional and emerging middle powers.

Conclusion



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This study demonstrates that both Indonesia and Türkiye exemplify distinctive yet complementary models of *middle-power mediation* in contemporary international relations. Indonesia's mediation approach is characterized by quiet multilateralism, normative diplomacy, and institutional engagement, grounded in its "independent and active" foreign policy doctrine. It relies on legitimacy, credibility, and moral authority rather than material leverage. Its interventions in the Moro peace process, the Rohingya crisis, and Palestinian advocacy highlight a consistent preference for facilitation and formulation strategies, emphasizing inclusivity, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation. Through ASEAN, the OIC, and the UN, Indonesia projects a peaceful and rules-based image, reinforcing its identity as a moral leader and regional stabilizer.

Türkiye, conversely, embodies an assertive and instrumental middle power, using a blend of humanitarian diplomacy, material leverage, and strategic pragmatism. Its roles in Somalia's peacebuilding, the Syria-Israel talks, and the Russia-Ukraine grain initiative illustrate a mediation style that combines diplomatic agility, geographic advantage, and tactical negotiation. Türkiye's multidimensional approach often yields rapid, visible outcomes but occasionally raises concerns about neutrality and consistency. Collectively, the comparative analysis shows that Indonesia's normative legitimacy and Türkiye's strategic assertiveness represent two effective pathways for emerging middle powers to influence global peace efforts. Their experiences affirm that non-hegemonic states, through adaptive and context-sensitive diplomacy, can make substantial contributions to conflict resolution despite material limitations.

The followings are some recommendations for Indonesia and Türkiye in mediating international conflicts.

1. **Institutionalize Collaborative Mediation Frameworks:** Indonesia and Türkiye should enhance cooperation through shared mediation platforms – potentially within ASEAN, the OIC, or the G20 – to combine Indonesia's normative legitimacy with Türkiye's operational capacity.
2. **Strengthen Mediation Capacity Building:** Both states should invest in specialized diplomatic training, mediation research centers, and coordination mechanisms to professionalize future peace missions.
3. **Leverage Complementary Strengths:** Indonesia's multilateral credibility and Türkiye's rapid-response diplomacy could be synergized in joint humanitarian or ceasefire initiatives, particularly in the Global South.
4. **Enhance Transparency and Neutrality:** Türkiye could benefit from clearer communication and multilateral validation to counter perceptions of bias, while



Indonesia should improve bureaucratic coordination to sustain long-term mediation follow-up.

5. Promote Middle-Power Coalitions: Both nations should champion South–South networks for peace diplomacy, fostering issue-based coalitions that enhance developing countries’ collective voice in global governance.

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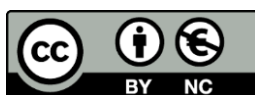
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