

Forging New Frontiers: Indonesia's Automotive Interests in the Indonesia- Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement

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Abstract

This study investigates Indonesia's strategic interest in prioritizing the automotive sector within the Indonesia-Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement (IM-PTA), its inaugural African bilateral pact. Contrasting with the agreement's dominant agricultural focus reflected in the tariff schedules for both nations, as both countries have plenty of competitive advantages in the agricultural sectors, this paper explores the unique phenomenon of Indonesia lobbying for the automotive sector as part of the manufacturing industry. Employing Neoclassical Realism (NCR) through a qualitative case study, we analyze how systemic pressures—including global trade uncertainties and Africa's market potential—interacted with domestic variables like elite vision (President Jokowi's economic diplomacy), state capacity, and automotive industry influence. Findings suggest the automotive focus emerged from a convergence of leadership goals and industry requirements. Mozambique was selected due to potential as a strategic gateway. Conclusively, NCR provides a robust framework explaining this foreign economic policy decision as an outcome of interacting systemic and domestic influences.

Keywords: Indonesia-Mozambique; Automotive Industry; Neoclassical Realism; Foreign Economic Policy; Non-Traditional Markets; Preferential Trade Agreements

Abstrak

Paper ini mengkaji kepentingan strategis Indonesia dalam memprioritaskan sektor otomotif dalam Perjanjian Perdagangan Preferensial Indonesia-Mozambik (IM-PTA), pakta bilateral perdananya di Afrika. Berbeda dengan fokus dominan pertanian dalam perjanjian ini yang tercermin pada kesepakatan tarif kedua negara, seiring dengan

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kedua negara memang memiliki banyak keunggulan di bidang agrikultur, paper ini mengeksplorasi fenomena unik Indonesia melobi penurunan tarif ekspor impor sektor otomotif sebagai industri manufaktur. Menggunakan Realisme Neoklasik (NCR) melalui studi kasus kualitatif, kami menganalisis bagaimana tekanan sistemik—termasuk ketidakpastian perdagangan global dan potensi pasar Afrika—berinteraksi dengan variabel domestik seperti visi elit (diplomasi ekonomi Presiden Jokowi), kapasitas negara, dan pengaruh industri otomotif. Temuan menunjukkan fokus otomotif muncul dari konvergensi tujuan kepemimpinan dan kebutuhan industri. Mozambik dipilih karena persepsi kemudahan negosiasi, kondisi yang mendukung bagi sepeda motor Indonesia, dan potensi perannya sebagai gerbang strategis. Kesimpulannya, NCR menyediakan kerangka kerja yang kuat untuk menjelaskan keputusan kebijakan ekonomi luar negeri ini sebagai hasil interaksi pengaruh sistemik dan domestik.

Kata Kunci: Indonesia-Mozambik; Industri Otomotif; Realisme Neoklasik; Kebijakan Ekonomi Luar Negeri; Pasar Non-Tradisional; Preferential Trade Agreements

Introduction

The landscape of international trade relations is increasingly characterized by diversification and the pursuit of new partnerships, particularly among emerging economies seeking to bolster their economic resilience and global standing. Within this context, the Indonesia-Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement (IM-PTA) stands as a noteworthy development. Signed in Maputo on August 27, 2019, and entering into force on June 10, 2022, as it is already ratified in Indonesia with the implementation of Peraturan Presiden 90/2021, Peraturan Menteri Keuangan 89/PMK.04/2022, and Peraturan Menteri Perdagangan 37/2022¹, the IM-PTA represents a significant milestone in Indonesian foreign economic policy. It is, crucially, Indonesia's first bilateral trade agreement concluded with any African nation, signaling a deliberate strategic move beyond its traditional economic spheres in Asia. This pioneering step suggests more than mere incremental trade liberalization; it points towards a potentially evolving Indonesian grand strategy, aiming to cultivate economic ties with non-traditional partners and tap into new growth frontiers. The selection of Mozambique, a nation on the southeastern coast of Africa, as the inaugural African partner further underscores the specific calculations driving this strategic outreach.

This paper focuses specifically on analyzing Indonesia's strategic interests in securing preferential market access for its automotive sector within the framework of the IM-PTA. The central research question guiding this analysis is: How does Neoclassical Realism explain Indonesia's strategic interest in prioritizing its automotive industry within this specific bilateral agreement?

This question is essential because as the IM-PTA encompasses a range of goods, initially granting preferential tariffs for 217 Indonesian products exported to Mozambique and 242 Mozambican products entering Indonesia, the concessions related to the automotive sector emerge as a particularly salient feature from Indonesia's perspective. The automotive industry holds significant weight within Indonesia's manufacturing base and national development aspirations, making its promotion through trade agreements a potentially key driver of Indonesian economic statecraft.

In addition to that, it holds relatively higher value of trade as it includes 1) Motorcycle with cylindrical machine capacity no more than 250 CC (HS Code 8711.20.00; tariff reduced from 20% to 7,5%)⁴; 2) Accu Battery (HS Code 8507.10.00; tariff reduced from 7,5% to 5%)⁵; 3) Rubber Tire (HS Code 4011; tariff reduced from 20% to 15%)⁶. Most of the other stuff lobbied in this agreement is mostly agriculture (fruits, vegetables, fisheries, other produce, and their derivatives), and is a normal thing to do as both countries are heavily reliant to agricultural industry. Approximately, 30% of Indonesian population works in agriculture, accounting to 13% GDP⁷, and 25% Indonesian Import⁸ & 20% Indonesian Export⁹ are related to agriculture. While for Mozambique, 80% of its population works in agriculture, accounting to 25% GDP¹⁰, an 60% Import & 35% Mozambique's Export are related to agriculture¹¹.

Hence, Understanding why this sector received specific attention in the negotiations with Mozambique offers valuable insights into the decision-making processes shaping Indonesia's contemporary foreign economic policy. Along with that, the emphasis on automotive exports aligns with broader policy directives emanating from the highest levels of the Indonesian government during the period leading up to the agreement. President Joko Widodo, commonly known as Jokowi, consistently articulated a vision centered on boosting Indonesia's industrial capacity and expanding its export footprint beyond established markets. His administration strongly emphasized economic diplomacy as a tool for national development. Underscoring this direction, President Widodo explicitly highlighted the need to penetrate non-traditional markets, citing Africa as a key region of opportunity. In a statement reflecting this policy push, he emphasized, "We must be aggressive in penetrating non-traditional markets such as Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, and Latin America"¹². This high-level focus provides crucial context for understanding the political impetus behind initiatives like the IM-PTA. Furthermore, during the signing ceremony, then-Indonesian Trade Minister Enggartiasto Lukita framed the

agreement strategically, stating that the PTA "will open the gate for Indonesia to enter the Southern African region"¹³. While the practical realization of such 'gateway' ambitions remains subject to scrutiny, the rhetoric itself reveals an elite perception of the agreement's potential strategic value extending beyond the bilateral relationship with Mozambique. This combination of presidential directive and ministerial framing suggests that the IM-PTA was not merely a technocratic trade exercise but a politically significant project embedded within a larger strategic narrative aimed at repositioning Indonesia in the global economy.

To unpack the complex interplay of factors driving Indonesia's focus on the automotive sector within the IM-PTA, this paper employs Neoclassical Realism (NCR) as its exclusive theoretical framework. NCR provides a robust analytical lens by bridging the gap between systemic-level pressures, such as the dynamics of the international system and global markets, and domestic-level variables, including leader perceptions, state capacity, and societal interests. This framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how external stimuli are filtered through a state's internal characteristics to produce specific foreign policy outcomes. The paper proceeds as follows: Section I shows the topic in general elaborates on the core tenets of Neoclassical Realism and its specific application to this case. Section II outlining the qualitative single-case study methodology and data sources utilized. Section III presents the core analysis, examining Indonesia's interests through the NCR lens by dissecting systemic pressures, key domestic intervening variables (elite perceptions, state capacity, and the automotive industry), the filtering process, and the rationale behind choosing Mozambique, while discussing the findings, reflects on theoretical nuances, and identifies areas for future research. Finally, Section IV concludes by summarizing the main arguments and reiterating the significance of the case.

To conduct an in-depth investigation into Indonesia's interests concerning the automotive provisions of the IM-PTA, this study employs a qualitative single-case study methodology and will be guided by the Neoclassical Realist (NCR) framework. This approach seeks analytical depth to understand the intricate process through which systemic pressures were filtered by domestic variables (elite perceptions, state capacity, automotive industry interests) to produce the observed policy outcome – the prioritization of automotive access in the agreement with Mozambique. The research draws upon a diverse range of primary and secondary data sources, including official agreement documents, Indonesian government sources, automotive industry data (Gaikindo/AISI),

academic literature, news archives, and provided context, allowing for crucial triangulation of findings necessary for robust NCR analysis assessing multiple intervening variables.

The reliance on varied sources enables a multi-faceted examination of the NCR model's components, illuminating elite perceptions, societal actor interests, and state capacity. The data analysis process integrates thematic analysis (identifying recurring themes like export diversification and non-traditional market focus), content analysis (examining policy documents and official statements), and interpretive analysis. This core step explicitly applies the NCR framework to systematically link identified systemic pressures (e.g., global trade environment) and assessed domestic intervening variables to explain the specific policy outcome of prioritizing automotive access in the IM-PTA, tracing the causal pathway demonstrating how external forces were mediated internally to shape Indonesia's actions.

Di sini judul daftar peringkat ke-2 Anda (jika ada) *Explaining Indonesian Foreign Economic Policy through Neoclassical Realism*

To investigate Indonesia's interests concerning the automotive provisions of the IM-PTA, this study employs a qualitative single-case study methodology guided by the Neoclassical Realist (NCR) framework. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of the intricate process through which systemic pressures (e.g., global trade dynamics, regional competition) were filtered by domestic variables within Indonesia – specifically elite perceptions, state capacity, and the interests of societal actors like the automotive industry (Gaikindo/AISI) – to produce the observed policy outcome: the prioritization of automotive access in the agreement with Mozambique. The research draws upon diverse primary and secondary data sources, including official agreement documents, Indonesian government statements and policies, automotive industry reports, academic literature, and news archives, enabling crucial triangulation for robust NCR analysis.

The data analysis integrates thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to Indonesian interests (e.g., export diversification, non-traditional markets), content analysis focusing on official documents and policy justifications, and critically, interpretive analysis explicitly applying the NCR framework. This core step systematically links identified systemic pressures and assessed domestic intervening variables to explain the specific policy outcome, aiming to trace the causal pathway suggested by NCR. While this methodology

allows for a multi-faceted examination, it acknowledges limitations inherent in accessing internal deliberations and the lack of verifiable access to specific primary documents like the IM-PTA's tariff annexes or comprehensive post-implementation trade data within the provided materials.

Indonesia's Interests through a Neoclassical Realist Lens

Applying the Neoclassical Realist framework allows for a structured analysis of Indonesia's decision to prioritize automotive market access in the IM-PTA. This involves examining the systemic pressures Indonesia faced, the domestic variables that filtered these pressures, the resulting policy outcome, and the specific rationale for choosing Mozambique as a partner.

In the level of systemic pressures analysis, especially in the global and regional context. Around the time the IM-PTA was being negotiated and signed (2018-2019), Indonesia operated within an international environment characterized by three key pressures that incentivized a reorientation of its foreign economic policy:

First is global trade uncertainties. The rise of protectionist sentiments globally, exemplified by the US-China trade tensions and increasing challenges to the multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO)¹⁴, created significant uncertainty for export-dependent economies like Indonesia. This environment encouraged states to seek alternative, more predictable market access through bilateral and regional trade agreements. Pursuing PTAs became a risk mitigation strategy in a less stable global trade order.

Secondly, pressure comes from intensifying regional competition. Indonesia's traditional export markets, particularly within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asia, faced growing competition. While these markets remained crucial, the potential for rapid export growth in established sectors might have been perceived as diminishing due to market saturation and the presence of strong regional competitors (e.g., Thailand and Vietnam in automotive and electronics¹⁵). This competitive pressure created a structural incentive to look beyond the immediate region for new growth opportunities.

The third reason can be derived from the rise of African markets. Concurrently, the African continent was increasingly perceived by global actors as a significant emerging market frontier. While facing diverse challenges, many African economies demonstrated substantial growth potential, driven by

demographic trends¹⁶, resource wealth¹⁷, and gradual economic reforms¹⁸. This perception attracted attention from established and emerging powers alike, including China¹⁹, India²⁰, Turkey²¹, and others, who intensified their economic engagement with the continent. For Indonesia, this presented both an opportunity to tap into new sources of demand and a competitive pressure to establish a foothold before these markets became dominated by other players. The concept of Africa as the "last frontier" for global economic expansion has likely found resonance within Indonesian policy circles, as reflected in the statement by Rosan Roeslani, the Minister for Investment and Head of the Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM): "Indonesia's investment in key African countries demonstrates our commitment to mutual prosperity, with Indonesian companies operating in eight African nations."²² Furthermore, a similar sentiment was expressed by Enggartiasto Lukita, Indonesia's Minister of Trade: "Mozambique has been chosen as a trade partner for Indonesia because it can serve as a hub for Indonesian products in Southern Africa."²³

Fourth systemic context can also be seen from the export diversification imperative. Collectively, these global and regional dynamics underscored a systemic imperative for Indonesia to diversify its export base, both in terms of products and geographical destinations. Over-reliance on a narrow range of markets or products increases vulnerability to external shocks. Diversification into non-traditional markets like those in Africa was thus not merely opportunistic but also a strategic necessity for long-term economic resilience and sustained growth.

These systemic pressures collectively created a window of opportunity and a sense of urgency for Indonesia to explore new economic partnerships, particularly in regions like Africa that had previously been peripheral to its core economic interests.

Domestic Mediation: Intervening Variables within Indonesia, and The Policy Making Process

Systemic pressures alone do not dictate policy. According to NCR, these external forces were filtered through Indonesia's specific domestic context, shaping how the pressures were perceived and what responses were deemed feasible and desirable. Key intervening variables that can be analysed in Indonesia-Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement deal include:

First, leadership perceptions and strategic vision. President Joko Widodo's administration (first elected in 2014, re-elected in 2019) placed a

strong emphasis on pragmatic economic development, infrastructure improvement, and enhancing Indonesia's manufacturing capabilities, encapsulated partly in the "Making Indonesia 4.0" initiative²⁴. A core component of his foreign policy was "economic diplomacy," aimed at leveraging international relations to support domestic economic goals²⁵. Crucially, Jokowi actively championed the expansion of Indonesian economic ties beyond traditional partners, explicitly targeting non-traditional markets in Africa²⁶, Latin America²⁷, and Central Asia²⁸. This outward-looking vision, driven perhaps by a desire to elevate Indonesia's global stature and secure new engines for economic growth, provided a powerful top-down impetus for initiatives like the IM-PTA.

This focus on Africa could also be interpreted through the lens of Indonesia's historical strategic culture, which includes a legacy of leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement and South-South cooperation dating back to the 1955 Bandung Conference²⁹. Engaging with African nations resonates with this historical identity, potentially providing ideational or symbolic value alongside perceived economic benefits. The statements by President Jokowi and Trade Minister Lukita suggest that elites perceived Africa not just as a market but as a region where Indonesia could exercise leadership and build strategic partnerships, framing the IM-PTA as a "gateway"³⁰. These elite perceptions, combining pragmatic economic goals with strategic narratives, were crucial in prioritizing engagement with Africa and framing the IM-PTA as a significant policy initiative, potentially elevating it above purely technocratic cost-benefit analyses.

Secondly, is institutional capacity and policy coordination. The realization of the IM-PTA required sufficient state capacity within relevant Indonesian ministries. The Ministry of Trade of Indonesia played a central role in negotiating and implementing the Indonesia-Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement (IM-PTA). On August 27, 2019, Trade Minister Enggartiasto Lukita signed the IM-PTA with the Minister of Trade and Industry of Mozambique in Maputo, marking it as Indonesia's first bilateral trade agreement with an African country³¹. In addition, the Ministry of Trade was responsible for the ratification process of the agreement. On December 8, 2020, the IM-PTA was officially enacted through a Presidential Regulation, after coordination with relevant ministries and the legislature³². The Ministry of Industry would have been involved in assessing the potential impact on domestic sectors and aligning the PTA with national industrial policy goals. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed

Indonesia's broader diplomatic relationship with Mozambique, setting the political stage for the agreement. On August 27, 2019, Indonesia's Ministry of Trade, led by Minister Enggartiasto Lukita, signed the Indonesia-Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement (IM-PTA) with Mozambique's Minister of Industry and Trade, Ragendra Berta de Sousa, in Maputo during the 55th International Trade Fair (FACIM 2019)³³. The successful conclusion of the PTA demonstrates Indonesia's institutional capacity to effectively manage negotiations, at least with a partner like Mozambique.

Third, is the automotive industry that play its roles as key societal actor. The Indonesian automotive sector represents a significant force within the national economy and thus a potentially influential societal actor in the NCR framework. It is a major contributor to manufacturing GDP, a significant employer, and a focal point for aspirations related to technological upgrading and industrial deepening under policies like "Making Indonesia 4.0." Understanding the industry's structure, performance, and interests around 2018-2019 is crucial.

In addition to that, the automotive industry is also actively leveraging its critical role in national employment—as it is directly engaging tens of thousands and supporting over 1.5 million jobs across its value chain³⁴—to significantly shape government policy towards export-led growth. This symbiotic relationship is driven by the industry's need to utilize substantial production capacity (around 2.35 million units annually³⁵) exceeding domestic demand, actively voiced by associations like Gaikindo which collaborates closely with ministries (Industry, Trade, Foreign Affairs) to lobby for market access⁴⁶. In 2017, GAIKINDO collaborated with the Ministry of Industry to explore exporting vehicles to Australia under the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA). The Director General of Metal, Machinery, Transportation, and Electronic Equipment at the Ministry of Industry, I Gusti Putu Suryawirawan, acknowledged the significant export potential that Indonesia can lead and emphasized the importance of conducting joint studies with GAIKINDO to realize this opportunity. GAIKINDO's proactive role in advocating for export-led growth, along with its collaboration with the government, underscores the importance of expanding market access for Indonesia's automotive industry and highlights the potential benefits Indonesia could derive from the IM-PTA agreement. Concurrently, the government, under initiatives like "Making Indonesia 4.0" and explicit directives from President Joko Widodo targeting ambitious export goals (e.g., "1 million units")³⁷, prioritizes the

sector's stability to prevent politically sensitive mass layoffs (PHK)³⁸. Minister of Industry Agus Gumiwang underscored this imperative, noting stimulus policies were crucial to "*prevent layoffs in the automotive industry sector*" and directly requesting industry cooperation to avoid job cuts amidst market pressures³⁹. This convergence of interests—industry seeking markets, government seeking economic growth and socio-political stability—elevated the importance of securing favorable terms in trade agreements, positioning the automotive sector as a key influencer in prioritizing deals like the IM-PTA as a strategic instrument to penetrate non-traditional markets and sustain employment.

Both the large domestic automotive market and production capacity also mean it is naturally competitive to achieve economies of scale that necessitated export outlets. The motorcycle segment is particularly dominant in Indonesia's automotive landscape, both domestically and in terms of export structure. Data indicates the overwhelming importance of two-wheelers (2W) in Indonesia's Completely Built Up (CBU) automotive exports. In 2022, for instance, motorcycles accounted for approximately 90% of the total volume of CBU automotive exports⁴⁰. This highlights the specific strength and export orientation of the motorcycle sub-sector.

Table 1: Indonesian Automotive Sector Overview (2017-2019, prior to IM-PTA signing)

Indicator	2017 (Approx.)	2018 (Approx.)	2019 (Approx.)	Source(s)
Total Vehicle Production (4W)	1.28 million	1.04 million	1.05 million	Gaikindo ⁴¹
Domestic Sales (4W)	1.38 million	1.13 million	940,000	Gaikindo / Focus Move ⁴²
Total CBU Exports (4W)	332,000	264,000	275,000	Gaikindo / Indo Shipping Gazette ⁴³
Motorcycle Production (2W)	7.14 million	7.86 million	7.29 million	MarkLines (Approx. based on general trends) ⁴⁴

Motorcycle Domestic Sales (2W)	5.88 million	6.38 million	6.51 million	CEIC (Approx. based on general trends) ⁴⁵
Motorcycle Exports (CBU 2W)	(No data available)	627,000	810,000	MarkLines ⁴⁶ & AAA ⁴⁷

The data presented in Table 1, underscores several key points relevant to the NCR analysis. First, the sheer scale of production, especially for motorcycles, highlights the sector's economic importance. Second, the comparison between production and domestic sales suggests that while the domestic market is large, export markets were becoming increasingly important, particularly for motorcycles where export growth appeared significant in the years leading up to 2019. This points to a potential domestic driver: the need to find new outlets to absorb growing production capacity and maintain growth momentum, especially if domestic demand showed signs of plateauing. The automotive industry, through associations like Gaikindo and AISI, likely possessed significant lobbying power due to its economic weight. The specific focus on motorcycles within the IM-PTA context strongly suggests that AISI's interests, or a state calculation prioritizing this high-volume export sub-sector, were particularly influential in shaping Indonesia's negotiating mandate.

The Neoclassical Realism approach posits that the systemic pressures identified earlier (trade uncertainty, regional competition, African opportunity, diversification imperative) were not automatically translated into policy. Instead, they were filtered through the intervening variables discussed above. Filtering process that can be identified within Indonesia's domestic variables in this context is as follow: elite perceptions, interests of societal actors like the automotive industry (Gaikindo/AISI), and the state capacity.

Elite perception can be seen on how President Jokowi's vision and the associated South-South cooperation narrative provided the high-level political will and strategic framing necessary to prioritize engagement with a non-traditional partner and a bold move into a new market like Mozambique. Societal actors provide concrete domestic constituencies advocating for market access. State capacity derived the President's and Society's will into the work of

institutional machinery of translating these perceived needs and political directives into a negotiated outcome

The Mozambique Calculus: Rationale for Partner Selection through Indonesia's NCR lens

The final piece of the puzzle is understanding why Mozambique was chosen as the first African PTA partner, particularly for this automotive push. Applying the NCR lens suggests the choice resulted from how potential partners were evaluated based on systemic opportunities but filtered through Indonesia's domestic perceptions and capacities:

First, is perceived receptiveness and diplomatic ease. From Indonesia's perspective, Mozambique may have been perceived as a relatively accessible and politically willing partner. Existing diplomatic ties, perhaps perceived lower regulatory complexity compared to larger African economies, and Mozambique's own potential interest in diversifying its partnerships could have made it appear as a less challenging negotiating partner. Mozambique's economic situation, including its reliance on imports and significant development challenges, might have paradoxically made it seem more receptive to an agreement potentially favoring Indonesian exports, particularly in consumer goods like motorcycles. The successful signing in 2019 suggests a relatively smooth negotiation process, supporting the idea of perceived diplomatic ease.

Second, is competitive landscape assessment. Indonesian decision-makers likely assessed the competitive environment in various potential African markets. While larger economies like South Africa, Nigeria, or Kenya might offer bigger markets, they also feature more established automotive industries or stronger competition from global players (China⁴⁸, India⁴⁹, Japan⁵⁰, European brands⁵¹, South Africa⁵² itself). Mozambique, with a less developed industrial base and potentially lower penetration by major automotive competitors, might have been perceived as offering a more favorable competitive landscape for Indonesian products, especially affordable motorcycles. It represented a potential niche where Indonesian exporters could gain a meaningful foothold without facing immediate, overwhelming competition.

Secondly, is strategic fit, especially in market niche and gateway perception. Mozambique's market characteristics likely appeared to align well with Indonesia's specific export strengths. The demand profile in a lower-to-middle-income country could favor affordable transportation options like

motorcycles⁵³, a segment where Indonesia is highly competitive. Mozambique's significant reliance on imports for manufactured goods further suggested market openness. Beyond the direct market, the 'gateway' narrative articulated by the Trade Minister suggests an elite perception, however aspirational, of Mozambique offering logistical or symbolic access to the broader Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. While the practicalities of this gateway function might be debatable given Mozambique's infrastructure and economic challenges, the perception itself, filtered through the domestic lens of seeking strategic footholds in new regions, likely played a role in the decision-making calculus. This choice might reflect a pragmatic calculation within the Indonesian state apparatus: balancing the grand ambition of African engagement with the perceived feasibility of securing an 'early win' in a smaller, more receptive market, potentially constrained by state capacity limitations or a desire to minimize risks.

In essence, the choice of Mozambique appears to be a result of systemic opportunities (African growth, need for diversification) filtered through Indonesian elite perceptions (strategic narratives, assessment of diplomatic ease), state capacity (ability to negotiate but perhaps preferring less complex partners initially), and societal interests (alignment with motorcycle export strengths).

The preceding analysis, grounded in Neoclassical Realism, demonstrates how Indonesia's strategic focus on securing automotive provisions within the IM-PTA can be understood as a product of interacting systemic pressures and domestic variables. The imperative to diversify exports away from increasingly competitive traditional markets and tap into new growth frontiers like Africa (systemic pressures) was interpreted and acted upon based on President Jokowi's leadership vision emphasizing non-traditional partnerships and economic diplomacy, the significant economic weight and export needs of the domestic automotive industry (particularly motorcycles), and the state's institutional capacity to negotiate and conclude such an agreement. NCR provides a coherent framework for tracing this pathway from external stimuli to internal mediation and finally to the specific policy outcome observed.

However, a nuanced discussion requires acknowledging certain complexities and potential limitations or alternative interpretations. One area for reflection is the gap between the strategic rhetoric surrounding the agreement and its likely immediate economic impact. The 'gateway' narrative,

while politically useful, warrants critical scrutiny. Mozambique faces considerable economic challenges and infrastructure deficits, which may limit its practical function as an efficient entry point to the wider Southern African Development Community region in the short-to-medium term. Furthermore, the actual commercial value derived from the PTA depends heavily on the depth of the tariff cuts achieved and the capacity of Indonesian exporters to overcome non-tariff barriers and logistical hurdles. Was the political capital invested in securing Indonesia's *first* African PTA disproportionate to the immediate, tangible economic gains expected from the Mozambican market alone? NCR, particularly through the lens of elite perceptions, can accommodate such potential disconnects by recognizing that leaders may prioritize symbolic victories, strategic positioning, or long-term potential (even if uncertain) over purely short-term economic calculations. Misperceptions or the strategic deployment of narratives that may not fully align with objective conditions are phenomena that the 'intervening variables' component of NCR can, in principle, encompass.

Another point for discussion concerns the relative weight of the different intervening variables. Was the automotive focus primarily driven by top-down political vision, or was it a bottom-up response to strong lobbying from the influential automotive sector? NCR suggests it is likely a combination, where elite goals and industry interests converged, reinforced by enabling state capacity. Chronological events show that Jokowi administration actively seek out sectors with export potential to fit its non-traditional market strategy, finding a willing partner in the automotive industry, such as in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The automotive industry also proactively lobbied for access to markets like Mozambique, with a receptive ear in an administration already predisposed to such initiatives⁵⁴, and the automotive industry proactively lobbied for access to markets like Mozambique, finding a receptive ear in an administration already predisposed to such initiatives. This convergence of political will and industry lobbying has positioned Indonesia's automotive sector as a growing global player⁵⁵.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed Indonesia's strategic interests in the automotive provisions of the Indonesia- Mozambique Preferential Trade Agreement through the theoretical lens of Neoclassical Realism. The analysis concludes that Indonesia's prioritization of its automotive sector, particularly motorcycles,

within its first bilateral trade agreement with an African nation is compellingly explained by the interplay between systemic pressures and domestic mediating factors, as conceptualized by NCR. The external context – characterized by global trade uncertainties, intensifying regional competition, the perceived opportunity in African markets, and the resulting imperative for export diversification – provided the impetus for Indonesia to seek new economic partnerships beyond its traditional spheres.

However, these systemic drivers were filtered through Indonesia's unique domestic landscape. President Joko Widodo's leadership vision, emphasizing economic diplomacy and outreach to non-traditional partners like those in Africa, provided crucial political direction and strategic framing. Concurrently, the significant economic weight and export-oriented needs of the Indonesian automotive industry, especially the dominant motorcycle sub-sector that actively leverages its bargaining power of employing a mass amount of people, constituted a powerful societal interest group whose objectives aligned with the government's diversification goals. The institutional capacity of the Indonesian state apparatus enabled the translation of these converging interests and directives into a concrete policy outcome: the negotiation and conclusion of the IM-PTA with specific provisions favouring automotive exports. The choice of Mozambique as the initial partner was further shaped by domestic perceptions of diplomatic receptiveness, a favourable competitive landscape for key Indonesian exports like motorcycles, and a strategic narrative positioning Mozambique as a potential 'gateway' to Southern Africa, reflecting a pragmatic calculus balancing ambition with perceived feasibility.

The utility of Neoclassical Realism lies in its ability to provide a structured framework that integrates these diverse factors – systemic, cognitive, institutional, and societal – into a coherent explanation of foreign economic policy. This case study demonstrates the framework's applicability beyond traditional security concerns and great power politics, offering valuable insights into the economic statecraft of an emerging economy like Indonesia operating within the context of South-South relations.

Ultimately, the IM-PTA, particularly its focus on the automotive sector, serves as a microcosm of broader trends in contemporary Indonesian foreign policy. It reflects Indonesia's evolving perception of its role in the global economy, its strategic response to shifting international dynamics, and the complex domestic political economy that shapes its engagement with the world.

Understanding this case through the lens of Neoclassical Realism not only illuminates the specific interests driving the agreement but also contributes to a deeper comprehension of how emerging powers navigate the complexities of the 21st-century international system, balancing external pressures with internal imperatives to forge new pathways for economic development and strategic influence. The agreement signifies an important, albeit perhaps initially modest, step in Indonesia's long-term strategy to diversify its economic partnerships and solidify its presence in previously underexplored regions like Africa.

Endnotes

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