Journal of Social Political Sciences
JSPS
Vol. 7, No. 1, February 2026

THE POTENTIAL OF STRATEGIC COALITIONS OF ALL-EMERGING COUNTRIES IN THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL ORDER

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Abstract: This study explores strategic partnerships among Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei in the contemporary multipolar order, using Critical Discourse Analysis combined with corpus-based semantic mapping. It reviews 312 official documents from 2024 to 2026, comprising ministerial speeches, policies, joint declarations, ASEAN summit declarations and foreign policy briefings, and analyses how language shapes geopolitical cooperation. The findings show substantial semantic convergence, highest between Indonesia and Malaysia, within a shared but asymmetric discursive framework. Framing (38.2%) and conceptual metaphor (29.5%) dominate the rhetorical strategies reported. Qualitative analysis presents Indonesia as the most assertive, agenda-setting voice, Malaysia as a balancing mediator, and Brunei as sovereignty-preserving and continuity-oriented. Higher semantic alignment is reported alongside stronger cooperation talk, especially in ASEAN settings, while discursive fragmentation is reported to weaken coalition cohesion by adding vagueness. The study presents semantic alignment as a measurable dimension of geopolitical strategy and argues that emerging-country groups can build shared narratives that align with the global landscape.

Keywords: Coalition, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Geopolitical, Potential.

Submission	December 13, 2025
Revision	January 24, 2026
Publication	February 27, 2026

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary geopolitical order is shifting away from Western European hegemonic centres. Between 2024 and 2026, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank project that emerging and developing economies will account for 60 per cent of global growth. Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, remains successful in diversifying its trade holdings. This is achieved through import protectionism, digital economy expansion and strategic regional diplomacy (International Monetary Fund, 2025; World Bank, 2024). Beyond economic measures, the geopolitics of these states is increasingly shaped by discourse. Language defines concepts such as sovereignty, collective security and regional

order, which affect capital markets. This shift, when seen through language use, is called discursive multipolarity. Emerging states strategically use discourse to justify their rights or assert influence in a contested global order. Yet a disconnect persists in the geopolitical agency of emerging countries within a strategic coalition. Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei share deep historical, cultural and linguistic ties that go back to the Malay world. However, their cooperative networks are often more a matter of policy than shared discourse. Their political dialogue is framed in different terms and shaped by distinct semantic logics, limiting how they relate to one another and how they can build a coherent strategic bloc. The main challenge is that without a unified language strategy, emerging-country coalitions may have less impact on emerging geopolitics.

Framing, in the sense used here, is the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and their elevation in a communicating text so as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). That selection is itself a form of power: political rhetoric can discipline audiences and opponents by making some courses of action sayable and others unsayable (Krebs & Jackson, 2007), and the same framing work that builds a domestic coalition can be turned outward to frame a country's decline or ascent for foreign audiences (Biegon, 2019). The article's claim that discourse does geopolitical work therefore rests on an established mechanism rather than on a metaphor alone.

This research addresses a key question: Can a strategic coalition among Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei be developed through discourse-influence models? Specifically, how are these political coalitions linguistically prepared in official and diplomatic speeches? What effect does semantic change have on their consistency and cooperation? Furthermore, can a shared discursive framework enhance their collective agency internationally?

Mainstream literature on Southeast Asian unity focuses on economics, politics and institutions, often overlooking language's role in shaping international life. Recent work in critical discourse analysis and geopolitical linguistics (for example, Kuo & Marwick, 2024; Fairclough, 2013) highlights how discourse sustains power relations, though empirical studies of intra-ASEAN coalitions remain scarce. This paper addresses these gaps by combining sociolinguistic analysis with geopolitical theory to offer a new interdisciplinary perspective.

The constructivist premise behind that combination is that international structures are made and remade through shared meanings and discursive practices (Wendt, 1992), that constructivism's promise lies precisely in explaining how identities and interests change through interaction (Hopf, 1998), and that a middle ground between materialist and purely ideational accounts is available (Adler, 1997). Norms spread in such a world not by automatic diffusion but through the life cycle of emergence, cascade and internalisation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), which is why a study of shared language can plausibly speak to coalition formation at all.

This work offers a new viewpoint. It considers strategic coalitions not just as material or institutional constructs but as discursive ones. These arise from the mutual influence of communications shaped by all parties: shared narratives, a semantic testing ground, and practice as a social context. The concept of semantic alignment is proposed as vital for successful coordination among newly emerging countries.

This study will utilise official speeches, policy statements and diplomatic communications from Indonesia, Malaysia or Brunei between 2024 and 2026. The methodology will employ critical discourse analysis in conjunction with corpus-based semantic mapping. The objective is to identify patterns of co-alignment or misalignment.

Strategic narratives give that objective its international-relations vocabulary: narratives are presented as a means of understanding soft power because states project stories about themselves and about the order they seek, and audiences accept, resist or rework those stories (Roselle, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2014). Whether such narrative work can still anchor order is an open question in a multipolar setting, where Asian multipolarity is argued to reshape rather than simply replace the liberal international order (Aryal, 2025) and where the future of that order is itself contested (Ikenberry, 2015). The study's question is therefore whether three states can narrate themselves into a coalition, not only whether they trade or meet together.

The study proposes several hypotheses. (H1) High levels of semantic alignment in diplomatic discourse point to higher rates of strategic cooperation. (H2) Discursive fragmentation reduces coalition effectiveness. (H3) Developing a shared geopolitical narrative promotes the standing of emerging country alliances globally. The study thus repositions language as an independent variable for understanding and practising strategy in the multipolar world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review draws on critical discourse analysis (CDA), geopolitical linguistics and constructivist international relations theory. In CDA, language is not just a reflection of power but directly shapes its structures, social reality and relations between states and society (Fairclough, 2013, p. 5). This view aligns with constructivist arguments advanced by Wendt (1999, p. 25), who argues that international structures are socially constructed. They arise from shared meanings and discursive practices. Geopolitical linguistics supports this perspective. States use strategic narratives, framing devices and semantic alignment to position themselves in the world order (Kuo & Marwick, 2024, p. 218). In Southeast Asia, discourse is especially significant, since the Malay world shares a linguistic heritage. Semantic similarity in communication acts as soft infrastructure for geopolitical cohesion. Published references show that emerging economies are increasingly influencing changes in world governance structures (Kuo & Marwick, 2024, pp. 267-269). Documents from the International Monetary Fund (2025, p. 12) and the World Bank (2024, p. 33) highlight Southeast Asia's geostrategic position in global supply chains. However, macroeconomic

analyses often focus only on economics and overlook language mechanisms that shape enduring cooperation. New perspectives are needed. A project on framing coherence in political communication (Chen et al., 2025, p. 7) shows that narrative consistency and framing consensus significantly affect state outcomes in international cooperation. Likewise, work on disinformation and the influence of communication on power reveals that too many divergent narratives from governments or their allies can weaken institutional trust (Kuo & Marwick, 2024, p. 220).

Combining corpus methods with critical discourse analysis is an established methodological synergy rather than an ad hoc pairing: quantitative patterns across large text collections can reveal discursive tendencies that close reading alone would miss, while critical interpretation supplies the social and political meaning of those patterns (Baker et al., 2008). The same complementarity is defended at the level of the field, where corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis are presented as approaches that gain from each other's strengths (Orpin, 2005). The present study's design, quantitative similarity scores read through qualitative discourse analysis, follows that logic.

The functional view of language that underpins this reading treats language as a social semiotic system in which meaning is made in context, so that grammatical and lexical choices are also social choices (Halliday, 1985). On that view, a shift in how sovereignty or centrality is worded is not decoration around a prior political fact; it is part of how the political fact is made recognisable to other states.

By going beyond national boundaries and examining how regional identities are constructed within ASEAN, the literature has complemented this analysis. Nonetheless, a group of scholars argue that ASEAN's Unity in Diversity principle is consolidated by carefully negotiated linguistic practices which keep national sovereignty intact, no more than would be repugnant to collective identity (Acharya, 2014, p. 58). However, empirical studies reveal persistent differences in how particular member states frame even their most fundamental terms. For example, Indonesia often talks about regional centrality, advocating a leadership-oriented discourse wherein this nation takes the lead, a role that Malaysia and Brunei tend to adopt much more cautiously, and sovereignty-preserving narratives (Rüland, 2025, p. 102). These differences mean that linguistic heterogeneity may act as both an asset and an obstacle in the building of coalitions. Whilst scholarship in the area is rich, there is still work to be done: firstly, many papers treat geopolitical cooperation primarily as institutional or economic, often ignoring how language itself can shape alliances. Secondly, although CDA has been widely applied within global power systems, it remains limited in its application to intra-regional coalitions among emerging countries, particularly within the Malay linguistic sphere. Thirdly, recent work on narrative and framing has not sufficiently integrated corpus-based methods capable of quantitatively capturing semantic alignment.

Norms do not travel unchanged into such a setting. Localisation, the active reconstruction of external norms to fit local beliefs and practices, explains why a shared ASEAN vocabulary can still produce different national meanings (Acharya, 2004). Hedging captures the companion behaviour: Malaysia and Singapore are shown to hedge against a rising China rather than balancing or bandwagoning outright (Kuik, 2008), a posture that helps explain Malaysia's mediating, restraint-marked discourse in the findings below. Indonesia's own claim to centrality is examined in the same terms, through its maritime-fulcrum framing of ASEAN centrality (Auliya & Sulaiman, 2019) and through comparative study of Indonesian leadership within ASEAN (Indraswari, 2022). The three study countries therefore enter the corpus with different, already theorised discursive postures, not as blank slates.

Because of this, the work prompts people to stop viewing strategic coalitions as strategies for the United States to observe other countries. Now the author extends the meaning of a coalition to a joining in international politics. When prior studies regard discourse as the second layer of analysis, while at the centre of this research has always been language, this article uses qualitative CDA methods in combination with corpus-based semantic mapping to study how Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei construct their geopolitical narratives between 2024 and 2026. In so doing, it makes a creative contribution to both linguistic and international relations scholarship, suggesting that the effectiveness of emerging-country coalitions is not simply a matter of material capabilities or institutional frameworks but must also take into account their discursive coherence.

Identity work of this kind is visible beyond Southeast Asia: national identity is constructed in business and diplomatic discourse between China and ASEAN interlocutors through recurrent identity claims (Yuan, Leng, & Wang, 2022), and the Malay world itself has a long history as an identity frame, studied as a concept of Malay identity formation (Hakim, 2017). The article's focus on shared Malay linguistic heritage therefore has a literature behind it, even though that literature does not by itself settle whether shared heritage produces shared policy language.

METHOD

The study used a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis and triangulation. It integrated principles of international relations and knowledge from political communication scholars, applying them within the boundaries set by previous research on linguistic structure, namely discourse analysis within the scope of relevant texts from sociology or psychology studies. The central analytical framework is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It also draws on corpus linguistics, which incorporates linguistic evidence into the research based on how different geopolitical alliances are constructed in cultural semiotics and whether they occur concurrently with established cultural contentious forms (that is, static forms). The central analytical framework is based on Fairclough's grammar of language, using a caution-oriented approach. If you look at language as an

instrument, you may find it hard to see anything else. Its central analytical framework, CDA, is adapted from grammatical analysis research for this work. This is because Fairclough sees language as a dialectical process, with both functional and social dimensions, so that grammatical regularities cannot be divorced from their actual social context (Fairclough, 2013, p. 5; Wendt, 1999, p. 25).

The vector machinery behind the similarity scores has a long lineage. A vector space model for automatic indexing represents documents as term vectors so that similarity can be computed geometrically (Salton, Wong, & Yang, 1975), and term specificity, the idea that rare terms carry more discriminating power than common ones, supplies the weighting intuition behind term frequency-inverse document frequency (Spärck Jones, 1972). Later vector representations learn word vectors from co-occurrence itself (Pennington, Socher, & Manning, 2014), and the pairing of term frequency-inverse document frequency weighting with cosine similarity remains a standard, teachable route to document comparison (Halim & Lasut, 2024). The article's scores should be read as instances of that family of methods, not as a new similarity mathematics.

The research is limited to texts officially issued by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei between 2024 and 2026, which are available online through government or ASEAN websites. These documents include ministerial speeches, policies and joint declarations, which were particularly useful for this research because they were well-preserved on the internet and could therefore be retrieved directly. One way to ensure the data were reliable was to limit the sources of these publicly accessible formal texts. This method was chosen because it is self-consistent and replicable. Nevertheless, while this ensures data reliability, it also means that the analysis is confined to formalised linguistic expressions. For example, the study may overlook grassroots or informal geopolitical narratives. To collect data, a systematic corpus was compiled according to predefined inclusion criteria: (1) officially published documents; (2) documents deal with regional or international cooperation; and (3) documents are in English or standardised Malay/Indonesian for comparability. A total of 312 documents were collected, yielding approximately 1.8 million word tokens after normalisation. All texts were converted into machine-readable formats and processed using AntConc and Python-based natural language processing tools (NLTK). The procedure was designed to be transparent and reproducible.

AntConc, the toolkit named in the study, was designed as a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for the technical writing classroom (Anthony, 2005); its presence in the workflow therefore signals concordance and frequency work of a standard kind, not a bespoke measurement instrument. No software version, tokenisation setting or stopword list is reported in the source, and none is supplied here.

Data processing was conducted in three steps: the first step, lexical normalisation, standardises orthographic variability in Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Melayu during

tokenisation. The second step applies term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) vectorisation for semantic content representations in each document. Cosine similarity measures are then applied to see how closely that semantic alignment matches language forms across nations.

The third stage was qualitative analysis through CDA. The focus included modality analysis, different construction frames, metaphors used and narrative structures. Activities included double-coding procedures to ensure the coding reliability of that technology, yielding a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.87, indicating fairly high inter-coder agreement.

Agreement coefficients require interpretation, not just reporting. The coefficient of agreement for nominal scales was introduced as a chance-corrected measure (Cohen, 1960), benchmarks for interpreting its strength were proposed for observer agreement data (Landis & Koch, 1977), and current guidance stresses that intercoder reliability in qualitative research must be debated and reported with its decisions, not treated as a single number that settles validity (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). The article's 0.87 is therefore reported here as a reported figure with that caution attached: without the number of coders, the coded unit and the double-coded sample, the figure cannot be rechecked from the article alone.

Triangulation: a strategy analytical approach to the evidence available. Key parameters guided by the objectives of six major projects influence international financial markets. This improves the validity of findings by cross-verifying conclusions from different sources and lines of argument.

This study processes raw data through various methods. Straight numbers furnish objective measures of alignment between semantic content representations, qualitative analysis puts these findings in their broader linguistic context, and macroeconomic data situates them within global geopolitical processes.

Conclusions were reached through an iterative analytical process. Initial findings from quantitative analysis were further refined through qualitative interpretation. In addition, at this stage, major points were confirmed or corrected using triangulation. Hypotheses about the relationships between semantic alignment indices and levels of discursive coherence were tested, reaching the thirties, with mentions of solidarity from different quarters.

In sum, this approach provides an effective and repeatable methodology for studying the lingual groundwork of global governance. By combining computational linguistics with critical discourse analysis, it introduces a new way to understand how language constructs emergent-country coalitions in the current global order.

Table 1. Framework Indicators as Stated in the Study

Indicator	Definition as stated	Reported value or role
Semantic alignment	Cosine similarity from TF-IDF vectors across national corpora	Indonesia-Malaysia 0.78; Malaysia-Brunei 0.74; Indonesia-

		Brunei 0.69
Joint-appearance index	Joint appearance of key political vocabulary, scored 0 to 1; above 0.75 described as high conformity	Joint statements: Indonesia-Malaysia 0.81; Malaysia-Brunei 0.76; Indonesia-Brunei 0.72
Rhetorical-device taxonomy	Four devices: framing, euphemisation, delegitimisation, conceptual metaphor	Overall: framing 38.2%; conceptual metaphor 29.5%; euphemisation 18.7%; delegitimisation 13.6%
Lexical clusters	Frequencies for regional centrality and sovereignty preservation clusters	Regional centrality: Indonesia 3.9%, Malaysia 2.1%, Brunei 1.3%; sovereignty preservation: Brunei 4.6%, Malaysia 3.8%, Indonesia 2.5%
Inter-coder agreement	Double-coding; Cohen's kappa	0.87 as reported, without coder count, coded unit or double-coded sample
Fragmentation	Abrupt shifts from cooperative to sovereignty-assertive framing	About 27% as reported; denominator stated inconsistently (see Limitations)

Note: Table 1 restates only indicators named in the study. No codebook, worked definition, example passage or document inventory is supplied in the source, so the framework is describable but not reproducible from the article alone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Consistent with prevailing practice for dataset quality control that reflects language standardisation and resource compatibility, the dataset of tones consists of English and Malay: two languages spoken widely throughout the area; Chinese, which is not often spoken in South-East Asia but increasingly significant today among users of the internet; and Arabic, spoken by small groups and Islamic state authorities representing this group. The text corpus consists of 312 official texts, 124 from Indonesia, 106 from Malaysia and 82 from Brunei, produced between January 2024 and February 2026. The data set includes ministerial speeches, joint statements, ASEAN summit declarations and foreign policy briefings that are made publicly available through government and ASEAN repositories of reputable standing. After normalisation, the corpus contained 1,846,233 words. Lexical processing was performed using AntConc and Python, and semantic clustering was verified through inter-tagger agreement (Cohen's kappa = 0.87), attesting to high reliability. The analytic procedure combines critical discourse analysis with corpus-based semantic mapping to identify patterns of convergence, divergence and storyline coherence among the three states. Quantitative results indicate the degree of gradation towards semantic convergence across the entire corpus. Using cosine similarity scores derived from vectorised term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) models, Indonesia-Malaysia discourse has the highest

average semantic similarity (0.78), followed by Malaysia-Brunei (0.74) and Indonesia-Brunei (0.69). These values suggest a reasonable extent of agreement but also show noticeable discursive asymmetry. In temporal analysis, there has been a clear trend towards greater convergence, from 0.71 in 2024 to 0.76 in 2026. This suggests that geopolitical narratives are gradually aligning as a result of further regional cooperation in fields such as the Digital Economy and Maritime Security. These points also reflect strong divergence in opinion. But the coefficient of variation remains large (standard deviation = 0.08), indicating continued heterogeneity.

Table 2. Semantic Convergence Analysis

Metric	Category or context	Measure type	Value
Semantic similarity	Indonesia-Malaysia	Cosine similarity	0.78
Semantic similarity	Malaysia-Brunei	Cosine similarity	0.74
Semantic similarity	Indonesia-Brunei	Cosine similarity	0.69
Temporal trend	2024	Average similarity	0.71
Temporal trend	2026	Average similarity	0.76
Statistical dispersion	Corpus-wide	Coefficient of variation (standard deviation)	0.08
Interpretation	Regional alignment	Observation	Increasing convergence in Digital Economy and Maritime Security
Interpretation	Discursive structure	Observation	Persistent heterogeneity and asymmetry

Further empirical tests based on lexical frequency analysis validate the strategic-framing picture of divergence. A study on the word cluster regional principal shows 3.9% in Indonesia, 2.1% in Malaysia and 1.3% in Brunei. This shows Indonesia's discursive positioning as a central player in Southeast Asia. Conversely, in a semantic cluster of preserving sovereignty, Brunei ranks first (4.6%), Malaysia is second (3.8%) and Indonesia is third (2.5%). This aligns with general observations that Brunei's own discourse stresses preservation; it disdains interference. Indonesians, on the other hand, prefer to be proactive in formulating and pressing for new ideas and directions themselves. Malaysia finds itself in an intermediary position, often using a combination of speech types, such as cooperative integration, while maintaining national autonomy. A secondary, quantitative dimension surveys how rhetorical devices are distributed in terms of methods, as defined by the study's own analytical framework: framing, euphemisation, delegitimisation and conceptual metaphor. For the overall corpus, framing takes up 38.2%, conceptual metaphors 29.5%, euphemism 18.7% and delegitimisation 13.6%. Indonesia has a higher-shaped framing (42.5%) and conceptual metaphors (31.8%); it often uses such narratives as regional resilience and collective destiny. Malaysia has a balance, with 36.1% framing and 21.4% euphemisation, indicative of restraint

in diplomacy. Brunei shows more euphemism, with 21.1% reported by chi-square tests (chi-square = 27.84, p < .01), confirming differences across national corpora.

Table 3. Strategic Framing Divergence

Section	Variable or cluster	Country or corpus	Measure type	Value	Interpretive note
Lexical cluster frequency	Regional principal	Indonesia	Percentage (%)	3.9	Highest; discursive positioning as a central Southeast Asian actor
Lexical cluster frequency	Regional principal	Malaysia	Percentage (%)	2.1	Moderate presence
Lexical cluster frequency	Regional principal	Brunei	Percentage (%)	1.3	Lowest frequency
Lexical cluster frequency	Preserving sovereignty	Brunei	Percentage (%)	4.6	Highest; preservation-oriented discourse and resistance to interference
Lexical cluster frequency	Preserving sovereignty	Malaysia	Percentage (%)	3.8	Intermediate position; cooperative integration with national autonomy
Lexical cluster frequency	Preserving sovereignty	Indonesia	Percentage (%)	2.5	Lower frequency; discourse tends to be more proactive and idea-driven
Rhetorical device distribution	Overall corpus	Framing	Percentage (%)	38.2	Most dominant rhetorical method in the full corpus
Rhetorical device distribution	Overall corpus	Conceptual metaphor	Percentage (%)	29.5	Second most frequent rhetorical method in the full corpus
Rhetorical device distribution	Overall corpus	Euphemisation	Percentage (%)	18.7	Moderate use in the full corpus
Rhetorical device distribution	Overall corpus	Delegitimisation	Percentage (%)	13.6	Least frequent rhetorical method in the full corpus

Rhetorical device distribution	Indonesia	Framing	Percentage (%)	42.5	Highest framing share; linked to narratives such as regional resilience and collective destiny
Rhetorical device distribution	Indonesia	Conceptual metaphor	Percentage (%)	31.8	Strong metaphorical orientation in national discourse
Rhetorical device distribution	Malaysia	Framing	Percentage (%)	36.1	Balanced framing pattern
Rhetorical device distribution	Malaysia	Euphemisation	Percentage (%)	21.4	Signals diplomatic restraint
Rhetorical device distribution	Brunei	Euphemisation	Percentage (%)	21.1	Relatively strong euphemistic tendency
Statistical test	Cross-national rhetorical-device distribution	Chi-square	Chi-square	27.84	Confirms significant differences across national corpora
Statistical test	Cross-national rhetorical-device distribution	p-value	p	< .01	Statistically significant at the 1% level

Note: Tables 2 and 3 restate figures as reported in the source. The per-country rhetorical breakdown is incomplete in the source (only two devices are given for two countries and one device for the third), and no contingency table, degrees of freedom or test sample size is given for the chi-square result, so neither the country profiles nor the test can be reconstructed from the article alone.

The survey establishes a yardstick based on the joint appearance of key political vocabulary. This index ranges from 0 to 1; values above 0.75 indicate high inter-speech conformity. When they make joint statements, Indonesia and Malaysia obtain an index score of 0.81, compared with 0.76 for Malaysia-Brunei and 0.72 for Indonesia-Brunei. It is worth noting that alignment scores rise in multilateral domains, particularly in ASEAN summit discourse (mean = 0.83), suggesting that organisational structures facilitate linguistic convergence. This finding supports the prediction that common platforms advance discursive harmonisation.

Higher scores in multilateral settings are consistent with a social-learning account of how states adopt shared language: compliance and identity change through interaction depend on

persuasion and social influence within institutions, not only on material incentives (Checkel, 2001), and external norms are localised rather than copied wholesale when they enter a regional setting (Acharya, 2004). The ASEAN summit mean of 0.83 should therefore be read as evidence of platform-facilitated convergence, not as proof that bilateral differences have disappeared, since the bilateral joint-statement scores remain lower.

Qualitative analysis helps gain a deeper understanding of these qualitative patterns. Indonesia maintains an assertive modality in discourse, employing likely verbs such as must, will and commit to consolidate a national perception of leadership and responsibility. Malaysia uses hedging devices to maintain flexibility and diplomatic prudence; these are more than those of Brunei. Should, can and continue to are widely dispersed in Malaysian discourse. Brunei's discourse is filled with deferential, consensus-seeking phrases like reaffirm, support and underscore. Businesses were notions brought into being, acts that both contributed to lower overall characterisation but created fragmentation, particularly in relation to clause items.

Analysis of narrative anecdotes also shows that Indonesia tends to back a problem-solution-vision format. Malaysia often uses a context-balance-cooperation format that emphasises mediation and inclusiveness. Brunei's discourse, on the whole, is geared towards continuing what is already going on and, especially, towards reaffirming existing agreements. These structural idiosyncrasies, while not intrinsically incompatible, will lead to different expectations for coalition dynamics in the future and could consequently make it difficult for a joint strategic narrative to emerge.

A triangulated comparison of methods confirms the reliability of these findings. For example, qualitative observations of the tape's roughness and narrative ebb and flow are also borne out in quantitative scores of semantic similarity. Moreover, rhetorical strategy distributions match up with identified patterns of modality and framing. Similarly, temporal trends in the past connect seven years: ranging from 2019 (2013), when the study observed no significant change, to 1926 (1995), characterised by a wave of cooperative initiatives, 2025 (p. 14), 2024 (p. 41), and 2008. They cover Southeast Asian economies and their overseas cooperation. These facts cohere a consistent picture which strengthens the analysis's rational basis and warrants trust in its validity. This confluence of evidence also validates not only this kind but also all subsequent research that this is indeed possible and worthwhile to pursue down this track.

Of particular importance, the data also reveals instances of discursive fragmentation. In about 27% of high-frequency geopolitical terms documents, there are abrupt shifts in framing, with cooperative stories replaced by sovereignty-assertive narratives. These cases will become evident after 1978. Such changes are particularly clear in bilateral instances involving highly sensitive issues, such as maritime frontiers and the between-tide land depression in Sanya, southern Hainan. Significantly, these figures show that there are combinations of cooperative

and competitive discourses which, if not managed strategically, can undermine the coherence of the entire coalition.

The results provide empirical evidence for the study's hypotheses. Higher levels of semantic alignment are associated with stronger expressions of political cooperation, particularly in multilateral settings (supporting H1). Conversely, when discursive fragmentation affects scores or narrative coherence is reduced, as seen with Japan's China, there is also a significant decline in linguistic affinity (supporting H2). Finally, those documents which display a high alignment score and an unvarying narrative tend to express clearer collective visions. This implies that shared international narratives at the geopolitical level can improve coalition effectiveness by providing greater clarity of intention and shared priorities (supporting H3).

The findings highlight the importance of historical discourse in determining geopolitical outcomes. This is one that can be seen significantly. In sum, while the shared understanding generated and the potential outcomes envisioned at various points in coalitions' ruling institutions are crucial for establishing successful structures, they remain shaped by the language that frames them. Between one country and another, a single departure from strategy might undo the work. She cited information she had gathered on her own language as evidence; still, any reader can discover the arguments of this paper as usual rehashes beneath new names. Geographical cooperation is where the universal language of geopolitics is written. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study provides a model for analysing the linguistic foundations of geopolitical cooperation in an emerging multipolar system.

Discussion

Based on the evidence collected in this research, it is clear that strategic alliances between developing countries are not solely the result of institutional arrangements or economic dependence. Rather, they are also largely mediated by the extent to which nations align their languages and discourses. The available data demonstrate moderate-to-high semantic similarity scores across the corpora of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, indicating a shared geopolitical vocabulary. But it is not evenly distributed. Such unevenness of distribution could be described as asymmetric discursive convergence. That is to say, there is convergence, but differences in national policies make it uneven. From a linguistic perspective, this supports Fairclough's 2013 argument, which he assumes is his area of research. Discourse operates as a site for negotiation rather than for the assertion of uniformity, especially in contexts where power relations are fluid and complex.

That Indonesia is more similar to Malaysia (0.78) than to Brunei (0.69) in semantic terms can be understood from both linguistic and geopolitical perspectives. In terms of language, Indonesia and Malaysia exhibit greater uniformity in the standardisation of Malay-derived words. This makes it more likely that the meaning of phrases in diplomatic discourse will

converge naturally. Geopolitically, both states also engage more actively in regional leadership and international cooperation, which entails a more coherent narrative.

By contrast, in Brunei's discourse, a slightly higher frequency of sovereignty-preserving words can be found. This lends itself to semantic resistance, thereby lowering the alignment score. This situation is not fragmented per se but reflects a dialectical discursive strategy which is intentional and flows from Brunei's political economy governance model. Therefore, the variation among alignment figures should be seen as functional differentiation rather than a weakness in the system.

The distribution of rhetorical strategies also supports the interpretation. In addition to international influences, Indonesia's use of framing and metaphors suggests it is trying to work out a larger national situation that makes little sense for the outside world. Frequent references to phrases like regional resilience and collective destiny also serve as a framing device to shape cognitive frames on regional issues more than they impinge physically or politically (that is, what sort of regional cooperation people buy into). Malaysia's balanced mix of framing and euphemism indicates a mediating role, in which linguistic moderation maintains diplomatic leeway, enabling it to act on multiple levels. Brunei prefers euphemism, an old loan from the ancient Chinese officials' stock in trade, reinforcing sovereignty while maintaining a discourse of stability and continuity that minimises conflict. This pattern aligns with general theories of political communication: linguistic choices reflect strategic positions within a network of power relations (Kuo & Marwick, 2024, p. 221). These findings are also supported by similarly mixed patterns when controlled for both longer-term measures and intervening activities from the early 2015s of national (Malaysian) publication. Triangulation among quantitative measures, qualitative discourse patterns and trends over time also strengthens these findings. The rise in semantic alignment among 2024-2026 matches observed increases in regional cooperation measures documented by the International Monetary Fund (2025, p. 14) and the World Bank (2024, p. 41). This convergence points to a substantive relation: that verbal conformism is not simply a theoretical construct but very much tied in with real developments in trade, digital integration for the One Belt One Road, maritime coordination leading to concrete agreements supporting real economic benefit shared between countries. In this sense, language both reflects and drives the power relations in territorial conflicts, thereby reinforcing what the constructivist model implies: that shared meanings are the basis for international collaboration (Wendt, 1999, p. 135).

Framing effects of this kind are not confined to the texts that carry them. Framing in news and political communication produces cognitive and emotional effects on audiences, so that the same underlying position can elicit different beliefs depending on how it is presented (Kepplinger, Geiss, & Siebert, 2012). The country profiles above, assertive framing in Indonesia, balanced framing and euphemism in Malaysia, euphemism in Brunei, should therefore be read as strategies aimed at audiences as well as at negotiating partners, even though the article reports no audience reception data.

Meanwhile, the deed persists in approximately 27% of the corpus, with discursive fragmentation. This underscores the limits of current coalition dynamics. Abrupt changes in the data, from a cooperative stance to a sovereignty assertion, show that opposite narrative logics coexist within a single space for communication. State shifts like these, from a linguistic perspective, can be said to constitute one form or another of discursive code switching, where countries oscillate between integrating and defensive narratives as they feel the pressure of their context. Although such flexibility may help navigate complex diplomatic environments, it also creates confusion, weakening the overall coherence of a strategic alliance. The research has confirmed that the second hypothesis is correct, that is, discursive fragmentation seriously hinders coalition effectiveness. This is not because it kills cooperation stone dead, but because it reduces the predictability and precision of cooperation, undermining everything at once. The argument of semantic alignment advanced in this study is substantiated when compared across different methods and materials. Meaning that high alignment scores in multilateral contexts, particularly the use of language within ASEAN discourse (mean = 0.83), signal an important role for institutional frameworks in promoting linguistic convergence. This implies that ASEAN not only serves as a platform for politics and the economy but also as a discursive forum where meanings are contested and codified into the prevailing norm. However, the lower levels of alignment which are observed in bilateral contexts reflect the lack of a fully internalised shared narrative, and so more concerted efforts need to focus on alignments at the intergovernmental level.

The most important point, however, is an effort to dispel the notion that, with uniformity, the system it encompasses goes along well in hand. Effective coalition-building rather seems to require a mix of convergence and divergence; too much homogeneity will crush national identities and flexibility, while excessive variation may bring chaos. Where it achieves the desired degree of success, a meeting point is as likely as countries pursuing partial alignment. Nevertheless, developments suggesting an intermediate model may be deduced in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The model lines up with Acharya's (2014, p. 62) pluralistic regionalism, where diversity is tempered by shared norms and communicative practices rather than obliterated.

Methodologically, the combination of corpus-based semantic analysis and critical discourse analysis holds great promise for advancing research on geopolitical linguistics. With TF-IDF vectorisation and cosine similarity, the degree of alignment can be quantified, while qualitative analysis can catch those context-based nuances that quantitative methods cannot reveal in isolation. Moreover, a high inter-code reliability coefficient of 0.87 is a further signal that researchers can adopt this approach without fear when their concerns are replicated. These are all windfalls for discourse analysts.

In the future, it is hoped that, by incorporating longitudinal data beyond 2026 or by comparing Southeast Asian coalitions with other emerging-country alliances, such as BRICS, this framework can be extended for wider application with entirely new results.

The significance of this study is not confined to the special cases of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. In today's geopolitical context, as emerging countries strive to assert themselves after years living in the shadow of major players like Japan, the ability to produce coherent, convincing narratives has become an indispensable resource. As they align their languages, countries exert soft power, enabling them to coordinate positions, voice collective interests, and raise their visibility at international meetings. Dispersed discourses, on the other hand, exert this power, even if it is implanted in sound institutional structures.

Finally, the discussion confirms that the big cushion of this country's strategic alliances, especially in language frameworks, has reached its peak. With empirical evidence supporting all three hypotheses, it can be said that semantic conformity is good for cooperation, discursive fragmentation is bad, and shared narratives have strong effects on a country's position in the global marketplace. Most studies of contemporary geopolitical alliances focus on material factors of power. This paper, in contrast, by foregrounding the role of language, offers an altogether deeper understanding of how these are constructed and maintained.

LIMITATIONS

This section states, plainly, what the article as printed cannot support. It does not supply missing material, and it does not re-interpret the unintelligible passages below into a guessed meaning. Each point is carried forward to the build note for the owner and, where relevant, for the authors.

First, the corpus cannot be checked. No list of the 312 documents, no document identifiers, no codebook, no example passage from any analysed speech, no software version or tokenisation setting, and no statistical output beyond the summary figures are supplied. The similarity scores, the temporal rise from 2024 to 2026, the joint-statement index, the ASEAN-setting mean of 0.83, the chi-square result (reported without a contingency table, degrees of freedom or test sample size), and the kappa figure of 0.87 (reported without the number of coders, the coded unit or the double-coded sample) are therefore reported here as reported figures, not as independently verified findings.

Second, the timeline as printed is impossible. The submission table gives submission on December 13, 2025 and revision on January 24, 2026, yet the corpus is stated to run to February 2026 and publication is dated February 27, 2026. Documents from February 2026 cannot have been in a corpus submitted in December 2025 or revised in January 2026. The printed dates are kept exactly as printed, and the contradiction is flagged here and in the build note rather than resolved by editing.

Third, the corpus language coverage contradicts itself. The Method restricts the corpus to English or standardised Malay/Indonesian for comparability, while the Results describe the dataset as also containing Chinese and Arabic. If the further languages are in the corpus, the inclusion criteria, the normalisation description and the comparability claim are all wrong; if

they are not, the Results description is wrong. The article does not resolve this, and the similarity scores must be read with that uncertainty attached.

Fourth, several passages are reproduced in their closest faithful rendering because their intended meaning cannot be recovered from the surrounding text, and no meaning has been guessed for them: the triangulation paragraph that invokes the objectives of six major projects and the movement of international financial markets; the temporal-trends paragraph that strings together mismatched year pairs and a stray list of years and page numbers; the fragmentation example located in Sanya, southern Hainan, which has no connection to the Indonesia-Malaysia-Brunei corpus; the qualitative observation referring to the roughness of a recording medium and to narrative ebb and flow; the sentence claiming that businesses were notions brought into being and contributed to lower overall characterisation while creating fragmentation; the reference to Japan's China in the discussion of the second hypothesis; the explanation of Brunei's euphemism by reference to an ancient official class's stock in trade; and the Discussion sentence about a big cushion of strategic alliances reaching its peak. The printed Conclusion sentence that contained an editorial flag questioning the sentence's own logic in its description of Malaysia's role has been rendered without that editorial flag, since the flag is not authorial text; the sentence's remaining wording is kept, and the removal is recorded in the build note. The printed Conclusion citation-like string naming three personal names joined by an unfamiliar connector, attributed to a 2013 source at a page number, matches no entry in the reference list and is not reproduced as a citation; it is recorded in the build note.

Fifth, the fragmentation figure has no stable denominator. The article gives about 27% once for documents containing high-frequency geopolitical terms and once for the corpus as a whole. The figure is therefore reported as about 27% as reported, without a precise definition, and it cannot be restated more precisely without the authors' definition.

Sixth, hypothesis support is overstated as printed. The first hypothesis asserts an association between alignment and cooperation strength, but no correlation, regression or association test is reported; the support offered is descriptive comparison of scores. The third hypothesis asserts an effect on global standing, but no measure of global standing is reported. The Conclusion below therefore answers the research questions on the article's own descriptive terms and records this qualification, rather than repeating an unqualified claim of confirmation.

Seventh, the central term is unstable. The article variously calls its central concept semantic alignment, semantic matching, semantic conformity and near-matching. This build uses semantic alignment as the operative term, following the Introduction and the framework table, and preserves the other labels only where they occur in the source's own wording, so that the instability remains visible rather than silently harmonised.

Eighth, the abstract's post-2011 ASEAN cooperation claim has no baseline, comparison or definition in the body, and the corpus covers 2024 to 2026 only. The claim is therefore not carried into the rebuilt abstract, and it is recorded in the build note. The corresponding email as printed matches neither author name nor affiliation; it is reproduced exactly as printed and flagged in the build note, and no replacement has been invented. Formal texts only are covered: by the Method's own admission, grassroots or informal geopolitical narratives may be missed, and no fieldwork, interview, survey or independently collected statistic is claimed anywhere in this build.

CONCLUSION

Lead question: can a strategic coalition among Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei be developed through discourse-influence models? On the evidence as reported, the answer is yes in a qualified sense. A coalition can be developed through shared discourse, but only as a managed balance of convergence and differentiation, not as full uniformity. The three countries share a Malay linguistic heritage and a substantial common semantic field, yet their alignment is persistently asymmetric, and that asymmetry is presented as functional differentiation rather than as a defect to be eliminated.

First sub-question: how are such coalitions linguistically prepared in official and diplomatic speeches? They are prepared through framing and conceptual metaphor above all, reported at 38.2% and 29.5% of rhetorical devices overall, through modality choices that mark assertiveness, hedging or deference, and through narrative formats that differ by country: a problem-solution-vision format associated with Indonesia, a context-balance-cooperation format associated with Malaysia, and a continuity and reaffirmation format associated with Brunei. Preparation is therefore visible in the texts, but it is not uniform preparation.

Second sub-question: what effect does semantic change have on consistency and cooperation? The reported effect runs in two directions. Rising average similarity, from 0.71 in 2024 to 0.76 in 2026, and the higher joint-statement and ASEAN-setting scores, are presented alongside stronger cooperation talk, especially in multilateral settings. At the same time, abrupt shifts from cooperative framing to sovereignty-assertive framing, reported at about 27% on an unstated denominator, are presented as weakening coalition cohesion by adding ambiguity and unpredictability. Semantic change therefore both enables and limits cooperation, depending on whether it moves towards convergence or towards fragmentation.

Third sub-question: can a shared discursive framework enhance collective agency internationally? The article's answer is that it can, by giving the three states clearer collective visions, more predictable mutual expectations and a stronger shared voice in international settings. That answer is stated on descriptive grounds: the analysis as reported compares scores and narratives but reports no association test for the link between alignment and cooperation and no measure of global standing, so the enhancement claim is a descriptive inference from the reported patterns, not a tested effect.

Taken together, the study's contribution is to treat semantic alignment as a measurable dimension of geopolitical strategy and to show, on its own reported figures, that emerging-country coalitions are built in language as well as in institutions and trade. Indonesia is presented as the bold, metaphor-rich agenda-setter; Malaysia as the carefully balanced mediator whose diplomatic language mediates its role; and Brunei as cautious and sovereignty- and stability-oriented, its expressions necessarily restrained. Effective coalition-building, on this account, is not characterised by homogeneity but by a balance with differentiation, in which linguistic variety is effectively managed within a mutually shared system of communication.

The potential for forming strategic coalitions among emerging nations like Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei will exist only when these three states can not only stake out a common interest but put together an appropriate language narrative to express this interest in concrete terms. Semantic alignment enhances cooperation by promoting mutual understanding and collective identity. Discursive fragmentation, however, limits it by creating ambiguity and difference. As the global order slowly shifts towards multipolarity, the ability to use language strategically may become an increasingly important factor in determining political agency. Future research should extend this analysis to wider coalitional environments and investigate how the digital communication environment is changing the scope of language for international cooperation.

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