



An Increase in China's Military Capabilities Amid Economic Power and the Influence on Indonesia

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Article Info

Article History:

Received: January 26, 2024

Revised: April 5, 2024

Accepted: April 24, 2024

Keywords:

China,
Economic Power,
Indonesia,
Military Capabilities,
National Security

DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.33172/jp.v10i1.19503>

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Abstract

This study explores the escalating military capabilities of China in the context of its burgeoning economic power and its subsequent influence on Indonesia. The background of this research is rooted in the recent surge in China's military and economic prowess and its strategic implications on the geopolitical landscape, particularly concerning Indonesia. The aim of this study is to understand the correlation between China's military and economic growth and to analyze its impact on the political, economic, and security aspects of Indonesia. The methods employed in this study include a comprehensive review of existing literature and analysis of publicly available military and economic data. The study also uses a comparative approach, examining instances of rising powers and their influence on neighboring countries. The findings reveal a significant increase in China's military capabilities, backed by its economic growth. This rise has led to a shift in the regional balance of power, influencing Indonesia's foreign policy, security strategy, and economic decisions. The study also uncovers the nuanced ways in which Indonesia navigates its relationship with China, balancing economic cooperation with national security considerations. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of China's military and economic growth and its far-reaching implications. It calls for a nuanced and strategic approach from Indonesia and other nations in the region to navigate this changing landscape.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the rise of China as a global power has been a topic of significant interest. This study aims to delve into this complex dynamic; several previous studies have explored China's growing military capabilities and economic power. For instance, according to Mearsheimer (2010), a political scientist,

examined China's potential to challenge the U.S. dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. Argued that the power gap between China and the U.S. is shrinking, and in all likelihood, 'the U.S. strategic primacy' in this region will be no more and also raised the question of whether China can rise peacefully.

Meanwhile, Mastro (2011) analyzed the strategic implications of China's rise for the U.S. and its allies, arguing that the U.S. is underreacting to the growing threat of China and should enhance the balancing aspects of its hedging policy. Strategic Implications of the U.S.-China Relations highlight the tension between the U.S. and China due to a narrowing power gap and ideological differences, which tend to push the two nations towards competition. This study also suggests that democratization in China could lead to a peaceful trajectory, but the review questions the assumption that a democratic China would align with U.S. interests. Emphasizes that American anxiety over losing primacy is a key factor in the relationship, independent of China's political system. With concludes that managing China's rise requires the U.S. to strengthen domestically and adapt to macro-level dynamics beyond political control and Friedberg's arguments underscore the complexity of strategizing for the future of U.S.-China relations (Mastro, 2011). On the other hand, studies by Sukma (2009) have focused on Indonesia's response to China's rise. Examined Indonesia's response to the rise of China. They argued that despite significant improvements in bilateral relations, Indonesia's policy towards China continues to reflect a degree of ambiguity. On one hand, Indonesia genuinely sees the benefits of having good relations with China. However, Indonesia remains uncertain and anxious regarding China's long-term role and intentions in the region (Sukma, 2009).

The comparison and gap identification of these studies provide valuable insights; they primarily focus on the U.S.-China dynamic or Indonesia's bilateral relations with China. There is a noticeable gap in the literature when it comes to understanding the impact of China's military and economic rise on Indonesia, particularly in the context of shifting power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. The novelty of this study aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of China's increasing military capabilities amid its economic power in the 21st century on Indonesia. It will consider various aspects, including political, economic, and security implications for Indonesia. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, combining an analysis of China's military and economic growth with an in-depth examination of its impact on Indonesia. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a nuanced understanding of the China-Indonesia dynamic in the context of China's rising military and economic power. It will also offer valuable insights for policymakers and scholars interested in Asia-Pacific geopolitics. So, building upon the presented research background, identified a topic concerning China's economic improvement, which could exert influence nationally and internationally. This study aims to analyze the rapid increase in China's military development alongside its economic expansion, considering it both a global advantage and disadvantage. Additionally, this study examines the impact of this phenomenon on Indonesia and the potential opportunities and difficulties it presents.

METHODS

The study explores the link between China's economic growth and expanding military capabilities, focusing on the potential repercussions for regional dynamics, especially concerning Indonesia. Employing descriptive qualitative research and an inductive approach, the analysis draws from various secondary sources to build a comprehensive understanding. The study posits economic power as a critical tool for analyzing the relationship between economic growth and military expansion,

highlighting the role of financial capability in enhancing a country's security and defense sectors. This exploration is crucial for understanding the broader geopolitical and security implications of China's rise for its neighbors, Indonesia, and the region.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

China is the second superpower in the world. Entering this century, it is considered to have succeeded in improving its national interests. In the context of developing "hard-power" defense, it can be seen from China deploying its military troops as a form of national defense, from issuing the doctrine of "offshore waters defense" with "open seas protection," which aims to increase national defense and safeguard activities in the maritime domain. Along with developing this doctrine, China modernized its navy, establishing naval bases abroad and militarising ports in destination areas. Apart from that, China also has missile capabilities that no longer need to be questioned. This is what causes concerns about threats from China. Apart from developing hard-power defense, China is also implementing soft-power defense development through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) policy, which along its route is filled with global trade, so that in the end, China has the opportunity to establish naval military bases in its alliance countries (Balasubramaniam & Murugesan, 2020).

China's economic ascension facilitates an augmentation of its national interest requisites, notably in military capability expansion, utilizing technological advancements for national defense enhancement. This pursuit symbolizes the convergence of economic prowess and army strengthening, wherein economic power derived from market forces—defined by a firm's sales prowess and profitability—plays a pivotal role. Beyond mere market dynamics, economic strength in the globalization epoch manifests through digital economy evolution. This emerging business paradigm leverages platform-based markets, permitting economic dominance attainment beyond tangible assets, encapsulating a multidimensional approach. Economic power, consequently, gravitates towards monopolistic practices and intense economic rivalry, where such monopolization fosters economic hegemony (Lianos & Carballa-Smichowski, 2022). Ultimately, certain nations, wielding economic supremacy, exert influence over others, ushering in an era of economic hegemony characterized by inextricable interdependence with both adverse and advantageous implications (Baldwin, 1980).

China's Economic Growth as an Economic Power

As one of the largest countries in the East Asian region, its population is ranked third in the world after the U.S. and India. (Twitchett et al., 2024). Entering 2010, China placed its country as the country with the largest economic growth after the U.S., where China had only experienced positive economic growth since the 1970s through global investment and trade (Chen & Wang, 2024). It has continued to increase until now. Beginning in 2024, China will experience growth and decline from the previous quarters. This decline had little impact because China's economy had increased uncontrollably (Lin, 2024). It also showed that China's economic strength rivaled that of the U.S., causing political tensions between the two countries through trade war conflicts. This trade war conflict has caused political tensions and influenced several countries more. The conflict between these two superpower actors disrupted the supply chain, hampered foreign investment, and even a power struggle (Grosse, Gamso, & Nelson, 2021). This study, employing a descriptive-qualitative methodology, critically analyzes the nexus between China's economic prowess and military expansion using secondary data. It aims to shed

light on the consequent geopolitical dynamics and their ramifications for countries like Indonesia.

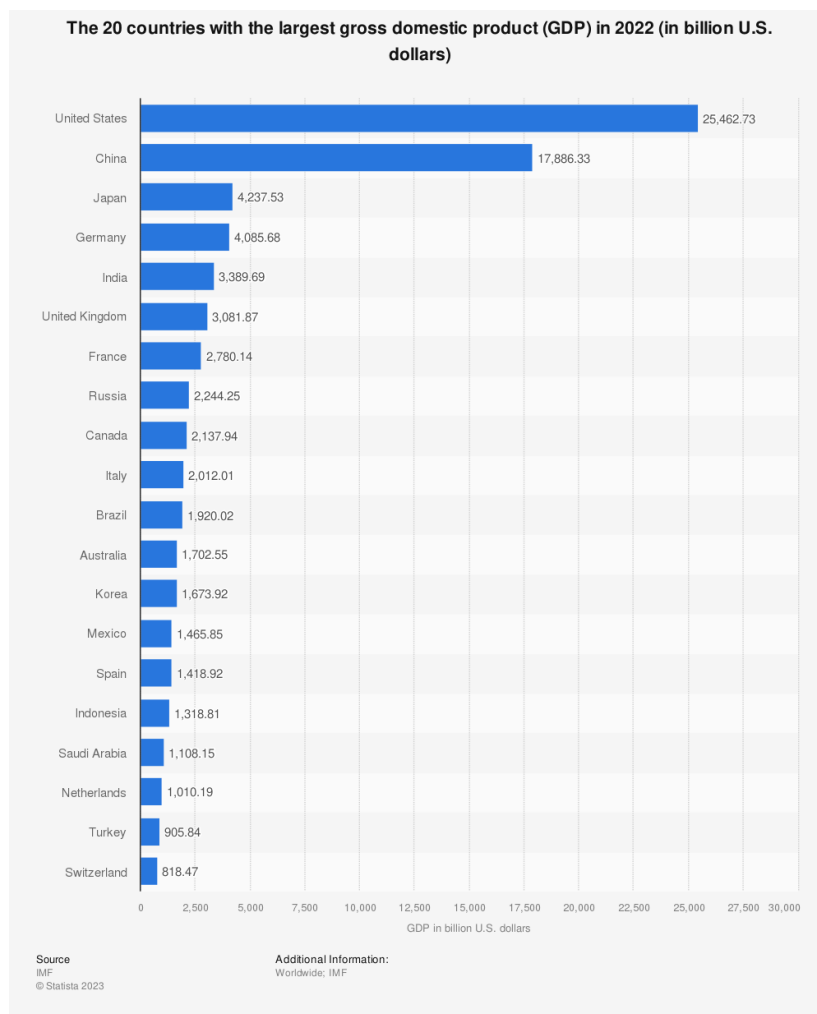


Figure 1. The 20 Countries with the Largest GDP in 2022 (O’Neill, 2023)

Before the 20th century, China's role in the global economy was comparatively limited. However, the nation's economic influence commenced a notable ascent starting in the 1970s, with a marked acceleration in Gross National Product (GNP) growth. Robust trade activities and exponential growth in outbound exports primarily fueled this surge. By 2010, China achieved a significant milestone as its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassed Japan's, positioning China as the world's second-largest economy following the United States (Twitchett et al., 2024). China's ascension to economic prominence is underscored by its substantial contributions to global trade, positioning it as a formidable competitor to nations such as the U.S. Commencing in 2011, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded at an approximate annual rate of 10%, albeit with fluctuations. This growth trajectory markedly surpasses that of the U.S. and other Asian economies, evidencing China's rapid economic acceleration and its burgeoning status as an economic powerhouse on the global stage (Ross, 2019). Despite experiencing numerous fluctuations, the Chinese economy has consistently demonstrated progressive enhancements and swift economic stimulus advancements. Concurrently, the tangible growth of China's economy has substantially augmented its global influence, perpetuating an ascendancy into the 21st century. This evolution underscores China's emergence as a country of formidable economic power (Yao, Zhang, Xu, & Bian, 2020). In

2022, China ranked its GDP in second place after the U.S., terms of GDP for the year 2022, with a GDP value of US\$14,307.53 billion. This ranking highlights China's significant economic size and output compared to other nations in that year.

China's economic improvement is gradually occurring, as evidenced by its economic growth in 2023, which will reach US\$10 trillion (Tan, 2024). However, entering early 2024, China's economy is considered to grow very slowly, down 5.2%. Several factors believe this decline was due to improvements after the COVID-19 pandemic and political tensions (Cheng, 2024). Notwithstanding the deceleration observed in its economic expansion during the initial quarter, China persists as a dominant global force, propelled by its preceding economic trajectory. China's ascendancy in worldwide trade and investment is underscored by its status as the world's second-largest exporter and importer, a position that has engendered friction and discord, especially evidenced in its trade surplus with major economies such as the United States. Furthermore, China's strategic extension of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and foreign aid into developing nations, particularly within Africa and Asia, illustrates a concerted effort to forge alliances, securing access to essential natural resources and markets while expanding its geopolitical influence (Grosse et al., 2021). China's economic ascendancy has been paralleled by substantial investments in research and development (R&D), particularly within pivotal sectors such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and aerospace. This strategic focus is evidenced by a marked surge in patent applications, scholarly publications, and high-technology exports, underscoring the nation's growing innovation and technological advancement prowess. Nonetheless, this upward trajectory in technological capability has engendered apprehensions regarding intellectual property rights, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the potential militarization of technological innovations (Ugwukah & Kasili, 2023).

The excellent state of China's economic system influences other countries, where a good form of macroeconomic parameters can improve and even change consumer behavior in choosing partners and their needs (Usman & Bashir, 2022). China's strategic elevation in technological domains, accompanied by an intensification of research and development (R&D) investments, has substantially contributed to domestic security through a notable reduction in poverty. This economic fortification has enhanced stability, resilience, and state security by addressing and mitigating societal grievances encompassing social injustice, corruption, inequality, and discrimination. The Chinese government's proactive stance, manifested in judicious policy expenditures and the enactment of pertinent laws, has markedly propelled a security enhancement within the populace. This approach underscores a comprehensive security paradigm, integrating economic vitality with social harmony to bolster national security imperatives (Xinhua, 2022).

China's increasing global influence is evident through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), often dubbed the "New Silk Road," which ostensibly benefits partner nations through enhanced cooperation. However, this strategy also facilitates China's pursuit of economic hegemony via export trade, investments, and the provision of high-interest short-term development loans, leading to significant trade surpluses for China. This approach exemplifies China's nuanced strategy to reposition itself as a central node in global power distribution (Sarieddine, 2023). Following China's economic reforms initiated in 1978, the nation experienced unprecedented monetary expansion, with an average GDP growth rate of approximately 10% across four decades. This meteoric rise has significantly altered the geopolitical landscape of East Asia. The United States had maintained a predominant influence in this region for nearly seventy years. China's

burgeoning economic power has made its cooperative endeavors highly attractive to other nations, potentially positioning China as the new hegemon in East Asia. This shift underscores the intricate interplay between economic prowess and geopolitical influence, highlighting China's strategic navigation toward regional dominance (Kim, 2019).

Military Rise from Economic Power

Empirical evidence suggests that countries with robust economic growth allocate substantial parts of their budget towards enhancing their defense resources, thereby augmenting military capabilities. This correlation between a country's economic prowess and its defense capabilities is widely observed. This financial stability ensures a reliable supply chain for defense materials. It secures the necessary resources, materials, and technology for maintaining national security.

Furthermore, economic prosperity plays a pivotal role in fostering international relations. Nations with strong economies often find it easier to establish cooperation, form alliances, and engage in international relations, leveraging their economic strength to navigate geopolitical landscapes. These countries exert influence and strategic advantages, influencing strategic alliances through defense cooperation, trade agreements in the defense sector, and forming robust global defense postures. Thus, the interplay between economic growth and defense capabilities is critical, underscoring the impact of financial stability on national and international security dynamics (Burns, 2018).

Economic forces profoundly influence military capabilities, with technological advancements in a country often directly tied to its economic strength. Nations with robust economies possess the financial resources necessary to invest heavily in the research and development of defense technologies. This investment facilitates the development and modernization of military equipment and strategies. Conversely, economic improvements enable countries to allocate resources towards reducing the national debt, including that accrued through defense spending. Defense expenditure plays a critical role in shaping a nation's economy. However, it also necessitates a careful balance due to its potential to divert funds from other vital sectors, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Consequently, a nation's economic prowess is linked to national security interests (Beattie, 2021).

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) as cited in Tian, Kuimova, Silva, Wezeman, & Wezeman (2019), five nations—namely the U.S., Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, and China—account for approximately 60% of worldwide military expenditure. In 2019, China, as the second-largest spender, dedicated roughly \$261 billion to its military budget, constituting 14% of global military expenditure. Significantly, China's military spending has been upward since 1994, marking continuous growth in its defense budget. This trend underscores China's strategic emphasis on bolstering its military capabilities amidst evolving global security dynamics. In 2022, China maintained its position as the world's second-largest military spender, allocating 13% of global military expenditure, significantly trailing the U.S., which accounted for 39%. This allocation underscores China's considerable role in the worldwide security landscape, marked by its substantial investment in military capabilities. The distribution of global military expenditures, illustrated in a pie chart, situates China prominently among the top fifteen countries, reinforcing its status as a pivotal actor in international security dynamics. This data highlights the disparity in military spending between China and the U.S. and underscores the strategic priorities of major global players.

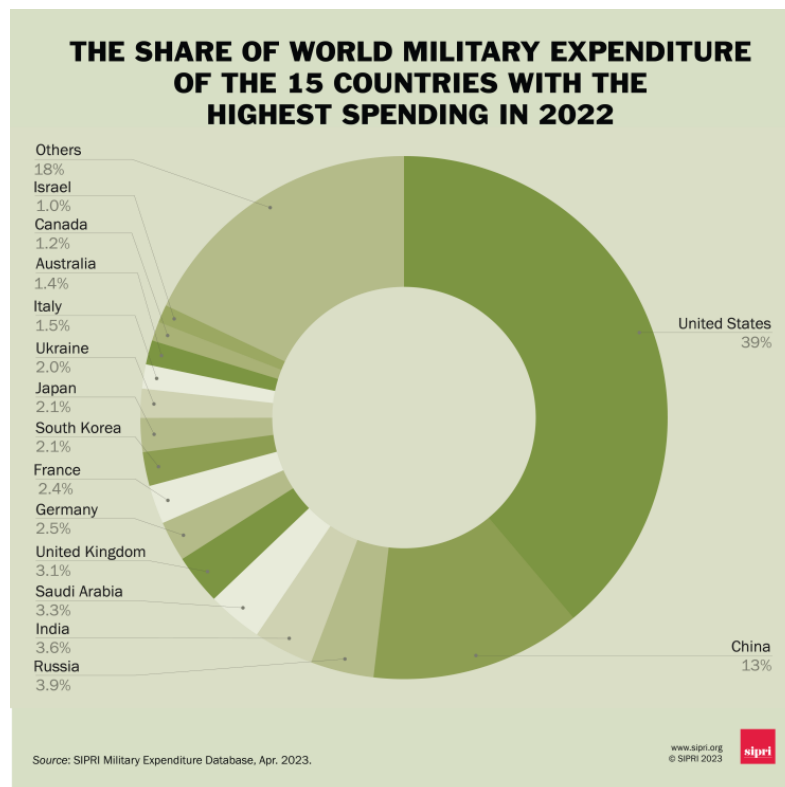


Figure 2. The Share of World Military Expenditure in 2022 (Béraud-Sudreau, Tian, Silva, Liang, & Scarazzato, 2023)

As a country with rapid economic growth, second only to the U.S., China has used its financial strength as a national defense in its military rise. Where economic growth can encourage military modernization, this is possible as China's defense spending to modernize the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Heath, 2023). The rise of China's military will continue to become more advanced and proficient along with the times and technological advances (Garamone, 2019).

China's global economic strength makes it an economic superpower that can compete with the U.S. through good economic relations on "One Belt One Road." China has successfully controlled the global and regional economies by increasing national defense. In fact, by increasing its national defense in the region through economic cooperation, China can create a new bloc that partners with it (Cordesman, 2023). Finally, until now, entering the 21st century, China and the U.S. have had political tensions in economic, military, and technological aspects (Schuman, 2022).

China's ascent as a military power significantly alters the landscape of global power dynamics, embodying a prime illustration of a nation adopting rational strategies to safeguard its existence. As a pivotal player in international affairs, China's strategic enhancement of its military prowess serves to fortify its global stance and influence. This commitment to military modernization is evidenced by substantial increases in defense expenditure and the advancement of sophisticated military technologies. Moreover, China has articulated a clear objective to cultivate a military force equipped for victorious engagement in conflicts by 2049, marking the centennial of the People's Republic of China. This initiative underscores China's determination to establish itself as a formidable military entity on the world stage (Yeka, 2022). China's military ascent has precipitated a "security dilemma," compelling other nations to enhance their military capacities in reaction. This dynamic engenders a cyclical arms race, potentially exacerbating regional

and global tensions (Zulfikar, 2024). China's military resurgence represents a pivotal shift in the geopolitical landscape, potentially challenging the extant dominance of the U.S. within the Asia-Pacific realm. This resurgence is poised to recalibrate the regional balance of power, signifying China's ambition to solidify its stature as a principal regional force. The consequent geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States could fundamentally transform the dynamics of international politics, altering the established global power status quo. Moreover, China's strategy, characterized by the amalgamation of economic prowess and military expansion, facilitates a subtle yet assertive quest for regional dominance, particularly in Asia-Pacific. This is evidenced by its militarization efforts in the South China Sea, which exemplify the nascent stages of Chinese hegemony. Such maneuvers pose significant security threats and exert pressure on adjacent nations, including Indonesia and other Asian entities, thereby undermining regional stability and security architecture.

The ascendance of China's military capacity poses a significant challenge to other economic powerhouses, wherein the U.S. emerged as the dominant superpower. This transformation in global power dynamics has been marked by a notable shift with China's rise, engendering a competitive landscape between these two preeminent superpowers. The manifestation of this rivalry is evident in the proliferation of military alliances within the Indo-Pacific region, reflecting a strategic response by regional states to the evolving security environment. This development underscores the intricate interplay between military prowess and economic influence in shaping the contemporary international order, highlighting the strategic recalibrations undertaken by states in navigating the complexities of this emergent bipolar competition (Han & Paul, 2020). The genesis of the alliance formation, rooted in conflicts such as those in the South China Sea, has precipitated China's militarization, highlighting the intricate nexus between geopolitical tensions and military expansion. This escalation, underscored by China's substantial military buildup, emerges from its augmented GDP, facilitating a surge in military spending.

Consequently, this militaristic augmentation harbors potential threats to less developed nations, emphasizing that these states must adopt diplomatic strategies and forge alliances posthaste. Such dynamics underscore the critical interplay between economic prowess and military strategy within the framework of global geopolitics, necessitating nuanced diplomatic engagement among nations to navigate the complexities introduced by China's military ascension (Xiang, Primiano, & Huang, 2015).

The Influence on Indonesia

China has emerged as a global economic and political power. Indonesia, as one of the countries in its economic cooperation alliance, is depicted as facing challenges and opportunities in establishing relations with China in the future, given the many negative impacts of cases of Chinese cooperation that have emerged.

Negative Influence on Indonesia: Challenges

Indonesia confronts multifaceted challenges in its response to China's ascension as a global economic superpower. This development positions it second only to the U.S. As China's economic and military prowess intensifies, Indonesia's strategic positioning becomes increasingly complex, particularly in navigating the intricacies of financial interdependence. The Indonesian economy, burgeoning yet susceptible, risks entrapment in a dependency network characterized by trade imbalances, escalating debt, and skewed investment inflows from China. Such a trajectory could inevitably lead to a

'debt trap,' a predicament wherein excessive borrowing fosters unsustainable financial obligations, thus potentially precipitating political duress and compromising economic sovereignty (Rakhmat, 2020). An illustration of this challenge can be seen from the many cases of debt-trap diplomacy that China has carried out against countries in Africa, such as several countries that have experienced cases of debt traps, such as Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Djibouti (Al-Fadhat & Prasetyo, 2022).

Indonesia's engagement with Chinese investment and infrastructure projects leads to a reliance that brings challenges. These projects often involve bringing Chinese workers to Indonesia, sparking public backlash and concerns over job losses for locals. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has adopted an assertive approach towards its diaspora, aiming to leverage overseas Chinese to further national interests and enhance its global image. This strategy includes cultural diplomacy, media campaigns, and political pressure. For Indonesia, this creates a complex issue. The ethnic Chinese minority in Indonesia might face suspicions of dual loyalty, raising concerns about their position and safety. Furthermore, this situation heightens the risks of espionage, dependency, and Chinese interference in Indonesia's domestic affairs, complicating the bilateral relationship and impacting Indonesia's sovereignty and social harmony (Rakhmat, 2021)

Indonesia's economic and political sovereignty is at risk due to its growing dependence on China. This concern arises from Indonesia's debt to China rose by 11% between 2017 and 2019, reflecting potential challenges in repaying loans for large-scale infrastructure projects under the Belt Road Initiative. This situation mirrors Sri Lanka's experience, where it lost control of a strategic port to China following a debt default. The increasing indebtedness to China may compromise Indonesia's ability to defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea, where China has made expansive claims. Indonesia must tread carefully to avoid compromising its sovereignty (Yu & Han, 2023). Indonesia's reliance on China poses challenges, notably in employment due to the influx of Chinese workers. This leads to tensions over job displacement and concerns over working conditions in Chinese-owned companies (Andy, 2023). The employment problems mentioned in the quote likely refer to issues arising from the presence of Chinese workers in Indonesia, the conditions they face, and the impact on local employment. Reports have highlighted concerns about the treatment of both Indonesian and Chinese workers in Chinese-owned enterprises in Indonesia, including poor working conditions and the perception that Chinese workers are taking jobs from locals (Adinda, 2023). While Chinese investments offer economic benefits, they also risk undermining Indonesia's financial independence and exacerbating local employment issues. This situation mirrors broader Southeast Asian dynamics, where economic growth and geopolitical interests intersect.

In security terms, Indonesia faces threats from China, especially regarding the South China Sea. China's assertion of the nine-dash line and militarization therein pose future threats to Indonesia, especially around the North Natuna Sea, which lies close to contested waters. This has sparked political tensions in the ASEAN region, with China bolstering its naval presence and constructing bases, notably on the Spratly Islands. China's actions, marked by increased Coast Guard mobilization, aim to assert territorial claims without adhering to international law, raising regional security concerns (Hwon, 2023).

Through the rise of China's military, which is rapidly growing, Indonesia must be ready to face future security threats. This can be seen from Indonesia as a strategic maritime center route, often placing Indonesia in a position between China and the U.S.

in political tensions. Entering the era of globalization, Indonesia is indirectly considered to have been trapped between the two China-U.S. military increases; this could harm Indonesia's security, development, and stability in the long term if Indonesia does not immediately realize and follow up on this. Several cases of the military revival of the two superpower countries can be seen from cases of political tensions in the South China Sea by China and the U.S. through a trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific region between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. (AUKUS) (Yaacob, 2023).

The rise of China's military power is considered to cause unrest; therefore, it is strategically important to prevent military aggression (Faulhaber, 2023). With technological advances, economic strength, and China's growing military, it can be assumed that China will be ready to militarise and threaten national security or cyber security (Chang, 2023). Therefore, China is increasing its military policy to launch long-term economic development in its country peacefully (Waldron, 2005).

Positive Influence on Indonesia: Opportunity

Considering China's robust economic prowess, Indonesia stands to gain significantly by choosing China as a prime economic partnership candidate in the future. Indonesia can tap into China's vast market and substantial capital reserves through strategic investment and trade collaboration. Leveraging China's BRI, Indonesia has the potential to enhance its role in interconnecting Asia, Europe, and Africa, focusing on infrastructure and connectivity projects. Notably, China represents Indonesia's second-largest trading partner and foreign investor, highlighting the depth of their existing economic ties (Sinaga, 2018). During the 2019 pandemic, Indonesia partnered with China to boost public health capacity and assert regional leadership against COVID-19 through vaccine cooperation. This partnership led to significant vaccine distribution and production development. China supplies millions of Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccine doses to Indonesia. Moreover, China pledged to support Indonesia in becoming a vaccine hub for Southeast Asia, facilitating technology transfer and expertise to Indonesian healthcare firms. This collaboration underscores a strategic alliance in public health between the two nations (Oratmangun, 2022).

As for other opportunities, Indonesia can carry out socio-cultural exchanges between Indonesia and China, considering that China has a rich and diverse cultural heritage and a long history of contact between peoples since the ancient times of the maritime Silk Road. Indonesia has a sizable ethnic Chinese minority, contributing to the country's social and economic development and as a bridge between the two countries. Indonesia can benefit from learning from China's growing interest and positive influence in the region, as well as China's soft power and cultural diplomacy initiatives to encourage mutual understanding, respect, and trust between the two countries, as well as foster a more inclusive and tolerant society (Yuniarto, 2021).

On the other hand, it is essential to cooperate with China and Indonesia, especially in the context of China's military and economic revival. Cooperation between the two countries can increase joint economic growth. China is one of Indonesia's largest trading partners, and substantial economic cooperation can help the economic development of both countries (Dahuri, 2023). Collaboration between the two through the economy can create improvements in large infrastructure projects, such as some new infrastructure in Indonesia, namely Indonesia China High-Speed Railways (KCIC or *Kereta Cepat Indonesia-China*) or Whoosh, which is the Jakarta-Bandung fast railway, which can improve connectivity and transportation efficiency in Indonesia (Jia, 2022)

In terms of security and defense, the two countries are required to establish security and defense cooperation between China and Indonesia. Both countries play an important role in maintaining security stability in the Asia-Pacific region, which faces complex and formidable challenges. To meet these challenges, the two countries' militaries must maintain close strategic communication, utilize existing cooperation mechanisms, and deepen pragmatic cooperation. Thus, strengthening multilateral coordination can help maintain positive momentum in military relations between the two countries, supporting regional security and stability. Indonesia must maintain good relations through China's military rise to ensure regional stability and security (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). There are several cases of maritime security threats in the Asian region. China and Indonesia face similar maritime security challenges in the Asian region. Therefore, increasing security cooperation, especially in the face of maritime security threats, is very important, given China's drastic military rise, so it can assist Indonesia in maintaining national security stability. Despite trust and weak security cooperation mechanisms, the two countries must enhance security cooperation to address maritime security threats (Lestari et al., 2022). Overall, this cooperation is vital to address immediate threats, build stronger bilateral relations, and support peace and prosperity in the region.

China and Indonesia are interested in maintaining maritime security in the Asia Pacific region, especially in the South China Sea, the Natuna Sea, and the Malacca Strait. Both countries face non-traditional security threats like terrorism, piracy, and transnational crime (Saragih, 2018). China's defense or military cooperation with Indonesia includes several aspects, such as political dialogue, military-to-military cooperation, defense industry cooperation, and multilateral cooperation. Some examples of this cooperation include high-level meetings between defense officials of the two countries, joint exercises between the navies and air forces of the two countries, the purchase of main defense system equipment (*Alutista*) from China by Indonesia, and participation in regional forums such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Samy & Kusumadewi, 2021). China's defense or military cooperation with Indonesia aims to jointly increase mutual trust, strengthen bilateral relations, and ward off maritime security threats. The benefits of this cooperation are to increase the defense capabilities of the two countries, expand economic and trade cooperation, and create regional stability and peace (Tao, Thamrin, & Waluyo, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

China's rapid economic growth and military expansion have reshaped global dynamics, particularly in Asia-Pacific. The country's focus on technology, research, and military modernization poses opportunities and challenges for neighboring countries like Indonesia. While China frames its military expansion as defensive, the region must remain vigilant to ensure stability and safeguard national interests.

Overall, this study recommends a few ways to solve these concerns. Seeing the challenges of the problem of "dependent countries" on China's economic policies, Indonesia must be able to predict the future picture, and it must be able to follow up on the urgency of diversifying its economic partners. Apart from that, Indonesia must also increase domestic economic productivity to protect national interests, assert sovereignty, strengthen defense capabilities, and encourage regional cooperation. In its strengths, Indonesia can use its abundant natural resources, strategic location, and large population to attract more Chinese trade and investment and diversify its products and

export markets. To maintain peace, China should establish good and cooperative relations with countries in the Asia Pacific region and avoid escalating conflicts that could harm all parties. China should also respect the rights and interests of other countries and contribute to global peace and stability. China can be a responsible and trustworthy partner in the eyes of the world while maintaining good relations with neighboring countries and trading partners and avoiding conflict and military escalation with the U.S. and its allies. With this, China can contribute more actively to global issues, such as climate change, peace, and human rights. However, Indonesia has an important role as a non-aligned alliance country in taking a proactive, flexible, and pragmatic attitude in managing its relations with China and the new Eastern Bloc. Indonesia must adopt a strategic approach in its relationship with China, balancing cooperation with competition. Diversifying economic partnerships beyond China and strengthening defense capabilities are essential to safeguard national sovereignty and autonomy. Enhancing regional cooperation within ASEAN and promoting dialogue with China can contribute to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

This research contributes valuable insights for public awareness and relevant institutions regarding China's military and economic growth. It also offers ideas for enhancing perspectives on the potential negative consequences of Chinese cooperation and the importance of strategic defense forces to avoid hegemony and expansion. This research acknowledges limitations in data management and comprehensive analysis due to restricted access to information. Further studies are needed to address these limitations and provide a deeper understanding of China's economic and military expansion implications for Indonesia and the broader region.

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