

Indonesian Defence Policy Under Jokowi Administration: Continuity or New Direction?

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Abstract

Since the beginning, Indonesia's foreign policy has adhered to the "free-active" principle. Nevertheless, the facts demonstrate that during President Sukarno's administration, Indonesia's foreign policy was considered to be leaning left and close to communist countries. During the Suharto era, Indonesia, on the other hand, grew closer to the West, specifically the United States and its allies. The succession of post-Suharto leadership, from Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati to Yudhoyono, major countries particularly the United States, continues to influence the pattern of Indonesia's foreign policy. This pattern of foreign policy appears to have also had an effect on Indonesia's defence posture and orientation. The question that should be addressed is: to what extent do great powers influence Indonesia's defence policy during Jokowi administration? In the midst of various issues ranging from the maritime fulcrum, the sink the vessels' policy, the issue of purchasing Russian-made fighter aircraft, the Sukhoi Su-35, and China's Belt and Road initiative projects, have triggered reactions from neighbouring countries and major powers. Using a historical explanatory approach, this article argues that Indonesia's defence strategy has been influenced by great powers since its foundation. Furthermore, despite Jokowi's efforts to show that Indonesia is an independent and neutral country it remains under the influence of great powers.

Keywords: Jokowi, Defence, Policy, Military Equipment.

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1. Introduction¹

Regional and geopolitical situations put realism as the mainstream theory for policymakers in Southeast Asia region (Di Floristella,2015; Liow 2005; Weatherbee,2014). Although realism has variant theories such as classical realism, neorealism, defensive realism, offensive realism, neo-classical realism, post-classical realism, all of these principally agree on the tenets of realism (Taliaferro,2000). Under international anarchy, all realism theorists agree that state survival, the balance of power, and security dilemmas have also become an anchor of analysis (Schweller and Priess,1997; Torkameh and et al,2022). Specifically, offensive realism, along with the core principles of realism, emphasises that to ensure state survival, it is the best to become the most powerful country in the region. Power maximisation in order to prevent the rise of a competitor is the other key argument of offensive realism. The purpose of this aggressive policy is to maintain state domination and keep the state motivation to be a regional hegemon (Lande, 2018). In this situation, offensive realism tends to promote the state for security-seeking using a credible nuclear deterrent (Krieger and Roth, 2007). Indeed, offensive realism pays much more attention to the ‘great power competition’ and domestic factors are obviously neglected (Monavari and Mohammad Sharifi,2017; Snyder,2002). Eventually, using offensive realist strategies, especially excessive power accumulation, led to the great powers expansionist foreign policy (Kaufman,1994; Lobell,2017; Mearsheimer,2001).

Existing research examines several ideas on the role of great powers. Because of political interests, great powers should be able to intervene in extra-regional matters (Mohamadi and et al,2019; Stoll and Ward,1989). Great powers strive to launch a worldwide of military operations (Trask and et al,2020) to distinguish themselves from other states as well as to oppose

1. In this paper, the terms foreign policy and defence policy are used interchangeably to reflect the interconnected nature of a nation’s external relations and military strategy. While foreign policy generally refers to a country’s strategy in managing its international relations, defence policy specifically pertains to the plans and decisions regarding national defence and military capabilities. Similarly, defence posture, defence strategy, and defence policy, though distinct in their precise meanings, are utilized in a broader sense to describe Indonesia’s approach to national and regional security. For further reading please see Morgan (2006); Green (2023); Baylis and et al. (2016)

and combat other powers (Mearsheimer,2001). The ability of great powers to expand their influence into other regions is primarily influenced by a number of factors. Kenneth Waltz proposes at least five traits that characterise a great power and its desire to lead others. The five items according to Waltz are: “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence” (Waltz,1993). Hence, how do great powers influence target states? There are also five mechanisms which great powers deliberately influence other states such as reward, punishment, expertise, attractiveness, and recognition (Meierding and Sigman,2021). In exchange, target countries have four policy options:

“First, the target adopts the influencer’s desired behavior; second, the target maintains a behavior that it otherwise would have jettisoned; third, the target refrains from adopting a behavior that it otherwise would have embraced, and, fourth, the target abandons an undesired behavior. A target could undertake these adjustments in response to an explicit influencer request (compliance) or it could adopt them proactively, based on its knowledge of the influencer’s preferences (anticipatory compliance)” (Meierding and Sigman,2021).¹

Since its independence, Indonesia has embraced the principles of neutrality in foreign policy known as "kebijakan luar negeri bebas-aktif," or free-active foreign policy (Hatta,1953; Sukma,1995). However, since the end of the Cold War neutrality is arguably less relevant (Layne,1993). Neutrality, according to realists, can only play a minor role in the balance of power, as the Cold War revealed. Indeed, smaller states tend jump on the bandwagon of great nations (Schweller,1997).

Several studies on Indonesia’s defence policy specifically among Indonesians have revealed that the formulated defence policy is heavily influenced by various factors. However, most studies agree that shifting geopolitical situations determined Indonesia’s behaviours. Former Indonesian defence minister under Yudhoyono’s administration Purnomo Yusgiantoro, for instance, argues that recent developments in Indonesia’s defence policy focus on combating non-traditional threats. Using strategic environment theory, Yusgiantoro emphasised that geopolitical changes, human rights, democracy, and other human security issues are not the only

1.The use of italics is emphasised in original texts as well as by authors.

concerns of developed nations. Instead, countries like Indonesia are forced to prioritise non-traditional issues which became popular. Because of these priorities, the Indonesian defence developments will not threaten regional stability or create arms races (Yusgiantoro,2017). In a similar vein, Wicaksana also argues that the changes in the international system have led to the rise of non-traditional factors, especially terrorism. However, states including Indonesia continue to use a military approach to counter-terrorism which leads to mistrust among regional members (Wicaksana,2019). Indeed, the use of the military approach in the two previous sources is in line with the former Indonesian chief of armed forces (TNI), Air Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto who argues that a military approach is continuously relevant (Tjahjanto,2019). Two specific works deal with Indonesian defence policy namely Lowry (1993) and Sukma (2012). Sukma offers a too-general explanation of Indonesian defence and security problems. While Lowry has presented a comprehensive Indonesian defence policy during the Suharto era using foreign policy with special attention to threat perceptions and alliance theories. There is no specific literature that analyses Indonesian defence policy was highly determined by great powers influences particularly in the contemporary era. Using Vosviewer as literature mapping software, it was discovered that study on the influence of major powers on Indonesian defence policy is still uncommon (Figure1). Instead, most academics examine Indonesia's relations with its neighbours. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will fill this void and add to the growing field of regional security studies and Indonesian defence policy scholarship.

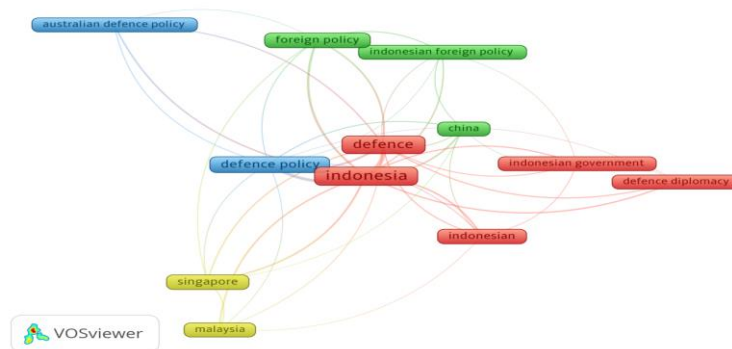


Figure (1): Network Visualization Indonesian Defence Policy
(Source: Author Analysis by Vosviewer,2023)

Jokowi & Indonesia defence policy Once Joko Widodo, or Jokowi as he prefers to be known, officially became Indonesia's president in 2014, the foreign and defence policy of Indonesia has attracted international attention. This is mostly due to the assertive policy concerning the sinking of foreign fishing vessels in Indonesian waters. The initiatives of the Jokowi government are seen as a powerful deterrent against the rise in illegal fishing by foreign vessels in the Indonesian oceans. Moreover, this policy is considered to have sparked much speculation as to the position of Indonesia among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries. The shift by Jokowi is seen as a setback in preserving regional stability in line with the policies of his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who succeeded in returning Indonesia to the position of respected leader of ASEAN (Parameswaran,2015; Sebastian and Chen, 2021).

Several countries have protested strongly against Indonesia's policies since the sinking action was introduced. Vietnam, for example, for at least three consecutive years was involved in three separate periods of tension with the Indonesian government regarding the problem of sinking fishing vessels. The most heated incident occurred in the Natuna Sea involving the vessel Vietnam Fisheries Resources Surveillance (VFRS) and the Indonesian Navy. The tension between the two countries ended after the Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi met with her Vietnamese counterpart (Arya and Agnes,2019). At the same time, Malaysia, through its foreign ministry in Putrajaya, is also concerned about the burning of fishing boats by the Indonesian authorities. However, in order to maintain good relations between the two countries, Malaysia has expressed its readiness to address any problems related to the issue with its partners in Indonesia (Borneo Post,2015). The Indonesian government, however, maintains that this policy is compliant with national law (Liliansa,2020).

In the midst of various regional issues, the Jokowi administration is explicitly insisting that sovereignty will no longer be up for negotiation, even with China. Jokowi has visited Natuna Island near the South China Sea several times. The agendas of all visits convey the message that Natuna Island is an integral part of Indonesia and will belong to Indonesia forever (Connelly,2016). At the same time, Jokowi perceived that rejuvenation and updating of weapons is vitally important for the armed forces since it is all aimed at "increasing the deterrent impact of the role of military defence

against outsiders who would threaten the sovereignty of the country.” It is not easy to realize this aim, however, because Indonesia also faces different complexities, including US sanctions if arms are bought from the competitor countries, namely Russia and China (Salna and Aditya,2020). The government is therefore attempting to encourage and strongly pursue national arms products to break the chain of dependency on weapons from other countries (Gorbiano,2020).

The question that should be addressed is: to what extent do great powers influence Indonesia’s defence policy during Jokowi administration? Even though Indonesia has a neutral foreign policy, can it truly be free from the influence of great powers? To address the question, this article uses a historical explanatory approach to examine resources from academic publications, official reports from government and organizations as well as online resources from the internet. This article argues that Indonesia’s defence strategy has been influenced by great powers since its foundation. Specifically, Indonesia perceives threats primarily from regional instability, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and potential infringements on its sovereignty. China and the US are the primary great powers influencing Indonesian defence policy. Moreover, in the Indonesian context, foreign policy significantly guides defence policy. Despite Jokowi’s efforts to show that Indonesia is an independent and neutral country, strategic decisions and defence posture are inevitably shaped by the influence of these great powers.

2.Indonesia’s Defence Policy during the Cold War

Under Sukarno’s administration, Indonesia’s defence policy was seen as being more aggressive. The source of Sukarno’s assertive policy primarily comes from his close political ties with the communist bloc especially the Soviet Union and China (Hill,2010). As a result, following full military support from the Soviet Union, Sukarno deployed the most modern military assets ever seen at that time during Operation Trikora (1961-1962) to seize and annex West Papua from Dutch control. The following year, during the confrontation or konfrontasi military campaign (1963-1966) against Malaysia, the main support in defence came mostly from China instead of the Soviet Union (Zhou,2014).

Meanwhile, during Sukarno’s hard-line policy (1962-1966), Indonesian offensive military capability was well-equipped by some modern hardware.

Most Indonesian military equipment was exported from the Soviet Union. The Indonesian Air Force for instance deployed Soviet made guns such as MiG-15 trainers, MiG-17 fighters, and II-medium-range bombers. Although the US was the Indonesian enemy, Indonesia also bought military equipment from the US for example C-130B Hercules, B-26 Invader bombers, P-51D Mustang, C-47 Dakota (Pathfinder,2011). In addition, during these periods of military operation, the Indonesian navy was fully supported by communist bloc-supplied warships which were historically recorded at the Battle of Arafura Sea (Platje,2001). Furthermore, the Soviet Union also secretly supplied significant military assistance such as submarines and bombers to support the Indonesian campaign in the Dutch West Papua (Easter,2017).

As soon as Sukarno was overthrown after Indonesia's attempted coup in 1996, Suharto assumed the reigns of the government. The Suharto regime immediately became a western ally and declared that communism was prohibited in Indonesia in any forms. Given the fact that Indonesia is a hard-line anti-communist nation and that it enjoyed harmonious relationship with the US and allies, Suharto's government received various financial and military aids to Indonesia (Jones,2002).

During the Cold War, Indonesia's defence policy was heavily influenced by great powers. Since the outbreak of the independence war, major countries, particularly Western allies, have been concerned about the expansion of leftist influence in Indonesia. Sukarno and his administration proclaimed Indonesia a neutral country, owing to Sukarno's intention to join and co-initiate the NAM. However, as a consequence of his domestic ally with left political factions and articulated in the pro-communist foreign policy direction, Sukarno became more favourable to the Eastern Bloc. Sukarno had vociferous in his resistance to what he called the West's neo-colonial ambition in Southeast Asia. In exchange, Indonesia received massive weaponry and financial backing, primarily from the Soviet Union, in order to realise Sukarno's aim to take over West Papua from the Dutch. Sukarno, on the other hand, was opposed to all offers from Western countries.

Meanwhile, after Sukarno was removed from power as a result of the fall of communism in Indonesia, Suharto emerged as a good guy and declared his country neutral. Suharto has a lot of clout in the NAM countries. The anti-communist campaign, on the other hand, was widely implemented throughout Suharto's government. Even his annexation of East Timor,

which was backed by the US, was justified in the context of preserving Indonesia from communist influence. Indonesia had a number of advantages in its dealings with the West during the Suharto regime, including the ability to build a national defence. It means that during the Cold War, Indonesia was not neutral. Sukarno is a staunch Soviet ally, whereas Suharto is a close ally of the United States.

3.Indonesia's Defence Policy in the Post-Cold War

Following the end of the Cold War and the changes of international systems, Suharto's security policy came under strong criticism even from Western countries. Indonesia was accused of human rights abuses especially in East Timor as well as other local conflicts in the countries. Indonesian military forces including Kopassus were strongly alleged to have committed torture, caused people to go missing, and kidnap (Dupont,2003:23). As a consequence, the US placed a military embargo on Indonesia. Hence, the Indonesian military lost various military aids from the US such as training and education fellowships for staff as well as being restricted from arms buying (O'Brien,2005). At the same time, Indonesia normalized its relations with China, which had been blocked for decades by the Suharto regime after Sukarno's fall (Sukma,1999).

Surprisingly, both Indonesian people and the international community were shocked by Suharto's sudden resignation, and he was succeeded by his vice president BJ Habibie on May 21, 1998. Political transformation started from this period and the Indonesian government was forced to demilitarise the Indonesian armed forces. Therefore, Dwi Fungsi ABRI doctrine was dismissed, the Indonesian military returned to their barracks, and the police became responsible for public security instead of the military forces (Laksmana,2019). BJ Habibie was replaced by Abdurrahman Wahid in 1999 and finally amid an era of political turmoil, Abdurrahman Wahid was replaced by his vice president Megawati. During this period of unstable national politics (1998-2001), the Indonesian government focused on recovering national security and attempted to gain international legitimacy. Since the collapse of Suharto and his military regime, Indonesia had witnessed various communal and inter-ethnic conflicts which affected national security. These included Maluku conflict 1999, Sambas conflict 1999, Sampit conflict 2001, Poso conflict (1998-2001) among existing separatism movements in Aceh and Papua (Schulze,2017). However, Indonesia regained international trust after the 9/11 attack in New York

followed by the global war on terrorism. Indonesia became more assertive in its focus on domestic counter terrorism programs including the creation of a police special counter-terrorism unit called 'Densus-88' (Arif,2015). As a result, the US altered its policy and Indonesia restored its relationship including the normalisation of defence cooperation with Washington which led Jakarta to focus on its national counter terrorism policy (Murphy,2010). The US military ban on Indonesia was finally lifted in 2005 and military cooperation and training was resumed by the Bush administration. The US believed that the ban should be lifted as Indonesia is an important partner in Southeast Asia as a bulwark against infiltration by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) (Murphy,2010). The restoration of military cooperation allowed Indonesia to overhaul F-16 jets and train Indonesia's high ranking military officers in the US (Permal,2005). In 2004, Megawati was succeeded by a retired army general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. During Yudhoyono's administration, the US lifted military embargos on Indonesia. Yudhoyono strived to restore the Indonesian defence capability and attempted to show the international community that the Indonesian military still had muscles. This message was apparently displayed during the Ambalat conflict while Yudhoyono deployed military assets and visited Indonesian armed forces in the disputed area close to the border with Malaysia. Yudhoyono also increased the defence budget and modernised the Indonesian armed forces by purchasing some military hardware. Prior his retirement from presidency, Yudhoyono announced the allocation of IDR 83.4 trillion (USD 7.67 billion) for military spending in 2014 alone (Aliabbas,2013). The modernisation efforts of Yudhoyono paid off and he has confidently insisted that the increased military posture has boosted the nation's dignity. Therefore, he was not reluctant to show off its most sophisticated primary weapons system to impress foreign commanders during the 69th Indonesian military anniversary. At the military parade, Indonesian soldiers demonstrated some military hardware such the F-16 Fighting Falcon, Hercules C-130, Super Tucano, Sukhoi SU-30 MK2, T-50i Golden Eagle, Indonesian made CN-235 MPA, German made Leopard Main Battle Tank, UK made Multi Role Light Frigates, French made Caesar 155mm Cannon, and many more (Boediwardhana,2014). Meanwhile, Yudhoyono also advised Jokowi to maintain the defence policy which he had himself introduced (Boediwardhana,2014).

Indonesia's defence policy undoubtedly has been restructured, refined, redirected during Yudhoyono's presidency. This was entirely owing to Yudhoyono's success in totally restoring the Jakarta-Washington relationship after fourteen years (1991-2005) of military sanction by the US. The purchase of Apache helicopters and the refurbishment of F-16 fighter jets by Indonesia symbolically marked the beginning of the restoration of relations with the US. The US, on the other hand, retains its ban on contact with Indonesia's Kopassus special forces, with the US military assistant focusing only on education and training (Harding and Natalegawa, 2018). As a result, in light of the increased terrorist threats in the region since the 9/11 attacks especially after Bali Bombings in 2002, the US and its allies seek to simply improve security cooperation with Indonesian national police. As a reward, the US and its allies have committed more than USD 200 million to Indonesia in order to bolster the country's counter-terrorism capabilities (Haripin and et al, 2020). Indonesia has become one of the leading countries in the region in terms of counter-terrorism as a result of its increased competence (Barton, 2018).

The end of the Cold War caused a shift in the defence relationship between Indonesia and the US. Although Jakarta was a close ally of Washington during the Cold War, the US directly influences Indonesia's defence policy through sanctions. However, following the global war on terror campaign, the US realigned with Indonesia, with no discussion of human rights issues as in the early 1990s, when the Cold War ended. The US also lifted military sanctions, allowing Indonesia to purchase military equipment as well as receive education and training facilities. The US, on the other hand, is concentrating on civil-based counter-terrorism strategies, including boosting cooperation with Indonesian national police, rather than with Indonesian armed forces, particularly Kopassus. China, as a rival of the United States, prefers to penetrate and influence Indonesia through its economy and trade.

4. Indonesia's Defence Policy under Jokowi: the Socio-Politico Analysis

The rise of China in international politics occurred peacefully (Pournajafi and Shariati, 2015). This is different from the US-Soviet rivalry which used a blatant, hard-line policy. Instead, the Chinese used economic diplomacy through various economic corridors and cooperation (Mousavi and et al, 2021). In fact, Indonesia is also highly dependent on US military products to meet its primary weaponry system. At the same time, huge Chinese investment in Indonesia which has massively improved national

infrastructure facilities such as highways, airports, seaports, power plants, smelters, etc., have created great opportunities for Indonesia. In addition, China also provides arms product to Indonesia for a cheaper price compared to other suppliers. Under uncertainty of international situation, Indonesia to find other arms providers which offer an affordable price and quality for deterrence efforts such as the Russian made Sukhoi, German-made main battle tanks and frigates, UK made warships, etc.

The South China Sea is challenging for Jokowi's administration since Natuna Island is directly in front of the areas of dispute. Although Indonesia is not a claimant state, Chinese behaviour near Natuna Island has alarmed Indonesia to protect its sovereignty. Jokowi has visited Natuna Island at least four times during his presidency. All of his visits carried the message that Natuna Island, which lies at the mouth of the South China Sea, belongs to Indonesia and not even an inch of land will be handed over to other countries, including China. In the issues around the Chinese claim on Natuna Island, for instance, there was an obvious trend observed that the Indonesian government tried to securitise the issues. From 2014 to 2016, the Indonesian government successfully convinced the public that Natuna Island was under threat from a Chinese claim (Meyer and et al,2019). In this context, the rhetoric of Jokowi's foreign policy was intended to attract internal constituents and gain more political support although his regional implications. This is a paradox while Jokowi's policy is to continue to receive Chinese investment on infrastructure projects as well as Chinese migrant workers (Negara and Suryadinata,2018). However, the influence of Chinese investment has also shaped Indonesia's response to China's manoeuvres in the Natuna Island. Critics argue that Indonesia's response has been relatively soft, likely influenced by the economic benefits of maintaining strong ties with China. This balancing act underscores the complexities in Jokowi's administration, as it navigates the dual objectives of fostering domestic economic growth through Chinese investments while attempting to assert its sovereignty in contested regions.

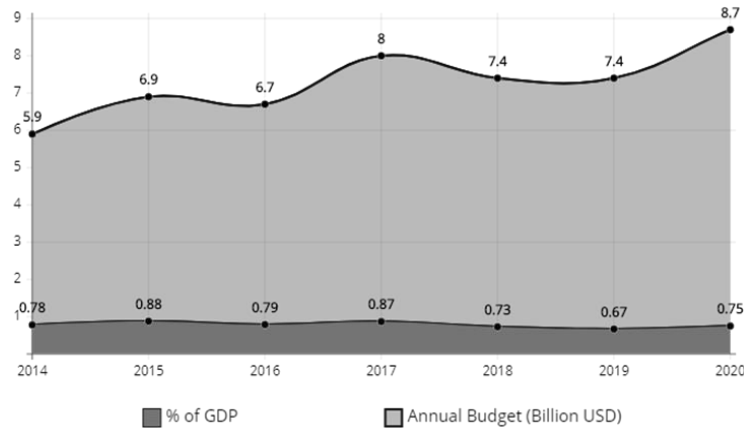


Figure (2): Indonesian Defence Budget during Jokowi's Administration
(Source: Modified from Ministry of Finance of Indonesia)

Under Jokowi administration, Indonesia's defence budget curve fluctuated (Figure 2). In 2015, a year after Jokowi came to office, he increased the defence budget by around 1% compared to the 2014 budget allocation. His commitment to boost Indonesian military muscle appeared in 2017 where the number was almost doubled to US\$ 8 billion, and the number was consistent at roughly US\$ 7.4 billion in 2018 and 2019. The number increased significantly in 2020 when Jokowi appointed his former rival in the 2019 presidential election, Prabowo Subianto as his Minister of Defence. In 2020 Prabowo proposed a huge budget amount of IDR 127.5 trillion (US\$ 8.7 billion). Although the Indonesian defence budget has risen significantly, the ration is relatively small compared to national GDP. From 2014 to 2020, Indonesia's military expenditure was still below 1% of GDP. Nonetheless, in terms of the budget amount, once Prabowo became Jokowi's cabinet member, Indonesia's defence budget spiked although no detailed information was provided (Firmansyah,2019).

During Jokowi's administration, the Indonesian government has procured several types of weaponry equipment. Up until 2020, the Indonesian army for instance has been equipped with 103 units of German-made Leopard 2A4 second generation main battle tanks (MBT) and hundreds of Indonesian-made light armoured vehicles (Gady,2016). Previously, the Indonesian army has purchased eight AH-64E Apache attack helicopters under a government to government partnership (Suherdjoko,2018). Meanwhile, to strengthen its naval power, the Indonesian navy has five

submarines made up of two Cakra class from Germany and three Chang-Bogo class co-assembled by Indonesia and Korea (Hakim and Suharto, 2019). In addition, to strengthen the air force, the Indonesian Defence Ministry has also equipped several outstanding combat aircrafts such as the US made F-16 Fighting Falcon, the UK made Hawk 200, the Russian made Sukhoi Su-27 and Su-30, the Korean made KAI T-50, and the Brazil made EMB-314 Super Tucano. To understand the current position of Indonesia’s defence capability in the region, the following tables present the highlight data.





Man Power 	Active personnel	400,000
	Reserve personnel	400,000
Air Power 	Fighters	41
	Dedicated Attack	39
	Transports	54
	Helicopters	177
	Attack Helicopters	16
Land Forces 	Tanks	313
	Armoured Vehicles	1,178
	Self-propelled artillery	153
	Towed artillery	366
	Rocket projectors	36
Naval Forces 	Frigates	7
	Corvettes	24
	Submarines	5
	Patrol	156
	Mine warfare	10

Figure (3): Indonesia’s Military Capability in 2020
(Source: modified from Global Fire Power (2020))

Surprisingly, Indonesia’s policy, especially related to ‘sink the vessels’, has had regional consequences. Vietnam and Malaysia were among the two neighbouring countries that have officially protested and raised concerns about the Indonesian decision to burn and sink vessels, an action which was conducted by Indonesia’s coast guard (Arya and Agnes,2019; Borneo Post, 2015). In addition, Beijing’s behaviour in the South China Sea also became the subject of serious discourse in Jakarta. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia summoned Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of China in Jakarta in order to convey protest concerning Chinese coast guard vessels which were involved in tension with Indonesia’s authority (Cabinet Secretariat,2016).

Following Indonesia's intention to purchase 11 Russian made Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets and to procure several Chinese made naval patrol vessels, the US government spurred Indonesia into cancelling the plan. The US government warned that if the deals continued, they would impact on Washington's sanctions on Jakarta (Salna and Aditya,2020).

The first US sanction on military affairs was imposed after the involvement of Indonesia's security force following the Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor in November 1991. This US military sanction was firmly implemented in 1999 by President Clinton's administration. The US government cut off all military ties with Indonesia under International Military Education and Training (IMET) (Inkiriwang,2020). The US military's ban on Indonesia finally lifted in 2005 and military cooperation and training was resumed by the Bush administration. The US believed that the ban should be lifted as Indonesia is an important partner in Southeast Asia as a bulwark against infiltration by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) (Murphy,2010). The restoration of military cooperation had allowed Indonesia to overhaul F-16 jets and train Indonesia's high ranking military officers in the US (Permal,2005). The US has never been Indonesia's top arms supplier, yet the US's policy towards Indonesia has been a pivotal one even since the country's independence (Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg,2002).

In the early 2020, the US's role in Indonesia has become increasingly significant especially on defence matters after the enactment of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), US Public Law 115-55. Under CAATSA the US government could impose sanction on countries who attempt to seek weapons from Russia, Iran, and North Korea.¹ Thus, the US concerns about Indonesia's plan to procure weapons from Russia means they will alert Indonesia that they will have to stop the arms deal or sanctions would be imposed. As a result, Indonesia eventually cancelled and changed its plan to buy weapon systems, including fighter jets, from Russia to those made in France (South China Morning Post,2020).

Indonesia is supplied arms from a diverse group of countries including the US, Russia, China, UK, France, and others. However, no single country

1.Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), US Public Law 115-55.

other than the US has provided military training and education for Indonesia's high ranking military officers since the 1950s. Thus, Indonesia's dependence on foreign weapons manufacturers is apparently high, especially on the US. Therefore, Indonesia is motivated in its endeavours to cut off dependence on foreign arms suppliers and defence industries. Jokowi has in general continued the pattern of his predecessor President Yudhoyono who initiated such regulations on defence industries as Law No. 16/2012 on Defence Industry, Law No. 59/2013 on Organisation, Procedures, and Secretariat of Defence Industrial Policy Committee or Sekretariat Komite Kebijakan Industri Pertahanan (SKKIP), Law No. 76/2014 on Trade Rewards Mechanisms in the Procurement of Defence and Security Equipment from Abroad. Once President Jokowi came to power along with his ambitious GM project, he enacted a new law called Law No. 141/2015 on Defence Industry Management. In addition, the Indonesian government was also provided with two additional pieces of guidance on the defence industry namely Master Plan for Defence Industry and the Triple Helix Relations for Defence Industry.

The objective of the Indonesian defence industry is to cut off dependence on foreign suppliers as well as to supply national defence equipment. The Jokowi policy to boost national defence industries has been seen as an effort to push the national economy as his political priority. Lack of quality of the arms products added difficulties to Indonesia's aim to enter a global market for defence manufacture. The trend of global arms exporters remained focused on major suppliers such as the US, Russia, France, Germany, and China as the top five global weapons providers. Meanwhile, countries like the United Kingdom, Israel, Italy, and the Netherlands ranked as top ten global arms exporters after those top five countries (SIPRI for the media, 2019). Because of its small export capacity, Indonesia remains an importer country. Vietnam has led and overtaken others to be in the top five Asian and Oceanian arms importers after India, Australia, China, and South Korea. As a result, Vietnamese military capability surged dramatically to become the second strongest nation in Southeast Asia after Indonesia (SIPRI for the Media, 2019). Nevertheless, the profits of Indonesia's arms sales towards national income were realised significantly only in two consecutive years (2016-2017) during Jokowi's administration. The details are as follows.

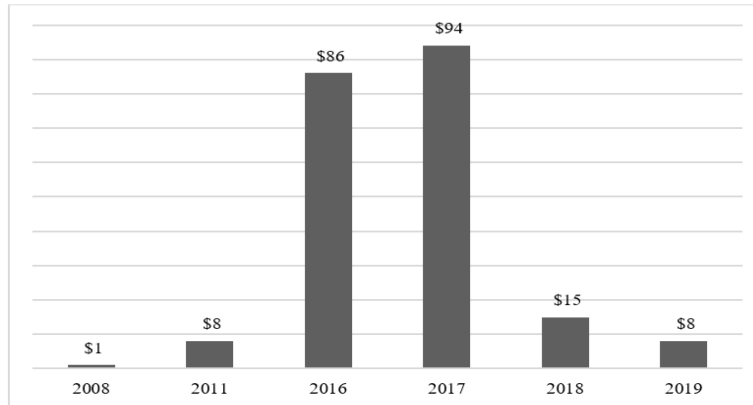


Figure (4): Indonesia’s Arm Exports 2008-2019 (Million US Dollars)
 (Source: <https://knoema.com/atlas/Indonesia/Arms-exports> (2019))

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the largest suppliers of Indonesian weapons to date are still the US and France, although South Korea has emerged as an important player in the last three years, as illustrated in the following graph.

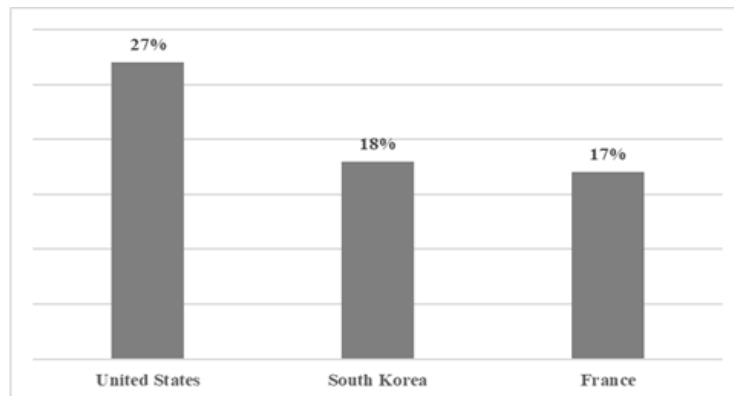


Figure (5): Indonesia’s Main Arms Suppliers, 2019 – 2023 (%)
 (Source: Wezeman and et al, 2024)

Indeed, the strategic manoeuvres and defence procurement decisions during Jokowi’s administration reflect the geopolitical tug-of-war between these two great powers. China’s influence is evident through its increasing economic investments and maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea, which has prompted Indonesia to bolster its naval capabilities. The Belt and

Road Initiative (BRI) has also intertwined economic and security considerations, pushing Indonesia to modernize its defence infrastructure to protect its sovereignty and economic interests. On the other hand, the US has maintained its influence through longstanding military cooperation and defence sales. The US has continued to support Indonesia's defence modernisation through training programs, joint exercises, and arms deals, ensuring that Indonesia remains aligned with Western defence standards. This dual influence creates a balancing act for Indonesia, as it seeks to leverage the benefits of its relationship with both powers while maintaining strategic autonomy. Jokowi's defence policy has thus been characterized by selective engagement, where Indonesia navigates the competing influences to enhance its national security and economic development. Therefore, the great powers' influence on Indonesia under Jokowi is marked by a complex interplay of economic, military, and strategic factors. By employing a socio-politico lens, it is evident that Indonesia's responses to these influences are shaped by its broader goals of economic growth, regional stability, and national sovereignty. This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding how great powers exert influence and how countries like Indonesia strategically respond to such efforts.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Indeed, the role of great powers decisively determines geopolitics and even influences the foreign policy attitudes and defence policies of nations. Indonesian defence policy under Jokowi reflects the high influence of international structure on state behaviours (Waltz,2000). The great powers' stances on military issues in Indonesia are interpreted as a type of interest-based, unilateral foreign policy (Biscop,2017). At the same time, policy options are also limited despite trying to be neutral as Indonesia's free-active foreign policy doctrine. However, the pressure of international structure changeably overtime depending on geopolitical situations (Rose, 1998). Domestic politics would influence state policy when foreign pressure eased, and vice versa (Desch,1998; Rose,1998). Hence, in the middle of great power rivalries, state leaders like Jokowi would have to grapple both with foreign policy and domestic political survival (Bjola and Manor,2018; Murphy,2017; Putnam,1988). Indeed, Indonesian defence and foreign policy during Jokowi's administration is an outcome of the great powers rivalries. Indonesia's defence policy aims to balance its relations between great powers rather than switching allegiance from one to the other. This is

evident in Indonesia's attempts to reduce dependence on foreign arms imports while its national defence industries, exposing the influence of great powers on the country. Indonesia seeks to maintain its weaponry system amidst major power contests. Indonesia was aware of the US's concerns about its plan to purchase fighter jets from Russia, and it carefully navigated these concerns to avoid confrontation with the US, a major power arms provider, especially vis-à-vis China during the new Cold War (Mank,2020). Simultaneously, Indonesia recognizes the crucial role of Chinese investment in its national infrastructure projects through BRI.

A pragmatic foreign policy has been applied in these circumstances, embodying Indonesia's traditional neutrality known as "mendayung antara dua karang" or "rowing between two reefs" (Sindunegoro,1991; Sukma, 1995). This pragmatism was also backed by Jokowi's vision prioritise economic gains. Jokowi's economic focus has driven diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to act as merchants and to promote business missions (Sihite and Christy,2015). On one hand, developing Indonesian defence industries ensures the availability of weaponry and generates income, while on the other hand, Indonesia continues to rely on arms imports. This dual approach highlights Indonesia's strategy of balancing its defence policy between the influences of great powers rather than aligning exclusively with one.

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