Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific

Indonesia

Jonah Blank
The U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) 2018 National Defense Strategy highlights the important role that U.S. allies and partners play in U.S.-China strategic competition. America’s strong and enduring relationships with its allies and partners offer the United States distinct advantages in long-term competition with China: The United States is not competing with China on its own but instead can draw from allied and partner resources, capabilities, and strengths that far exceed what China can bring to bear. As DoD focuses on long-term strategic competition with China, understanding how U.S. allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region are responding and adjusting their approaches to China will be crucial to ensuring the success of U.S. strategy.

This report on Indonesia is part of a project that aims to understand the perspectives of U.S. allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific as they formulate and implement their responses to China’s more assertive foreign and security policy behavior in the region and to a more competitive U.S.-China relationship. The research team also assesses how DoD (particularly, the U.S. Air Force) can best deepen and improve its ability to work with allies and partners to maintain U.S. advantage in long-term strategic competition with China. The other reports in this series are available at www.rand.org/US-PRC-influence.

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Summary

Issue

The U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) 2018 National Defense Strategy highlights the importance of working with regional allies and partners in order to manage China’s rise as a strategic competitor to the United States in the Indo-Pacific region. One of the important partners in this effort will be Indonesia, a nation whose military is larger than that of any other potential new partner in the region other than India and Vietnam. Indonesia is the world’s fourth-most-populous country, containing the world’s largest population of Muslims. It encompasses a geographical space of more than 17,000 islands, stretched out across 3,000 miles. It is by almost any reasonable definition the most democratic nation in Southeast Asia. Its self-defined core national security interests, including the preservation of its sovereignty against encroachment by any would-be hegemonic regional power, are in relatively close harmony with those of the United States. In this report, we examine whether and how the United States can increase its cooperation with Indonesia, as well as the potential rewards and some of the challenges associated with doing so.

Approach

The research for this report draws from a variety of primary and secondary sources, data sets, and, most importantly, interviews with U.S., allied, and partner government and military officials and academic experts. The Jakarta-based author of this report conducted work for this project (including close study of Indonesia’s formal security doctrine, the Buku Putih Pertahanan) in Bahasa Indonesia (shortened in this report, as in Indonesia, to “Bahasa”). In order to understand regional responses to competition, we interviewed experts in Indonesia and in other nations in the region.

Conclusions

The United States and Indonesia share deep concern about China’s ambitions for regional dominance and willingness to violate international norms in pursuit of these ambitions. Both states, however, would prefer a strategy that corrals China into compliance with global norms over one based on military confrontation. U.S. planners should be aware of the following factors tempering the pace and extent of partnership with Indonesia:

- Indonesia remains fiercely opposed to what its strategists term blocs. It is highly suspicious of the intentions of any foreign powers.
Indonesia regards China as its only realistic near-term military foe, with a specific potential for military confrontation over its Natuna Islands near the South China Sea. But because of the imbalance of military capabilities, as well as China’s enormous economic leverage, Indonesia has very little appetite for military confrontation.

Many items in the U.S. playbook of security engagement will run into institutional barriers in Indonesia. These barriers include low levels of military funding, a security policymaking bureaucracy that is not designed for speedy decisions, and a tendency to make security policy on an ad hoc rather than a doctrinal basis.\(^1\)

**Recommendations**

For the U.S. government at large:

- Accept Indonesia’s deep-seated desire for nonalignment. In practice, this means that the United States should refrain from actions that Indonesia is likely to interpret as forcing it into a de facto alliance: for example, pushing for high-profile advertising of security cooperation with the United States, when Indonesia might prefer greater rhetorical balance.
- Pay particular attention to consultation and protocol. In any meeting with U.S. counterparts, the “deliverables” for Indonesian interlocutors might include courtesy calls, official parades or displays, and any other displays of courtesy.
- Increase engagement on maritime domain awareness (MDA). From a U.S. Air Force (USAF) perspective, MDA requires air assets (such as the Insitu ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicle) and is part of a unified air and maritime fulcrum.
- Reexamine the legal issues surrounding crew lists. The United States, unlike most other nations, refuses to provide crew lists for U.S. Navy vessels in Indonesian ports.
- Seek opportunities to work with Indonesia to prevent Chinese political interference and influence operations. As a nation whose democracy is only two decades old, Indonesia remains potentially vulnerable to political manipulation.

For DoD and the USAF:

- Increase emphasis on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). This represents perhaps the lowest cost but highest yield avenue for engagement. HA/DR is an area that Indonesian National Military doctrine describes as a core mission. It improves interoperability, does not impinge on Indonesia’s nonaligned status, and lends itself to multilateral exercises.
- Enhance U.S.-Indonesia cooperation in the areas of cyber and electronic warfare. The Indonesian Army is now significantly ahead of its air force counterpart in the cyber arena, and this might be a useful area for USAF engagement.
- Encourage Indonesia’s growing cooperation and engagement with U.S. allies, such as Australia, South Korea, and Japan, and emerging partners, such as India and Singapore.

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1. An example of this tendency would be Indonesia’s policy toward China regarding Indonesia’s only major territorial dispute: fishing rights (and, by extension, potentially territorial rights) over the Natuna Islands. The degree to which it confronts China over incursions into the Natunas Exclusive Economic Zone varies by time and political context.
• Increase the availability of military education programs for Indonesian officers. Indonesian officers eagerly compete for slots at U.S. institutions and take all slots offered.

• Encourage Indonesia to increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, including participation in multilateral air and maritime activities and conducting operations in the South China Sea—while being aware that such participation might be modest.

• Share U.S. satellite and other information (principally, U.S. military, but potentially also including civilian branches of the government) with Indonesia about potential Chinese incursions in Indonesian territories, including the Natuna Islands and elsewhere.
Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the numerous officials, analysts, and scholars in the United States, Indonesia, Singapore and other nations who focus on Southeast Asian security issues and who generously shared their time and insights throughout the project. The author is also grateful to Paula Thornhill, Stacie Pettyjohn, Bonny Lin, and Raphael Cohen for their helpful reviews of draft versions of the report.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRI</td>
<td>Belt and Road Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAATSA</td>
<td>Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoD</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>foreign direct investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FONOP</td>
<td>freedom of navigation operation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HA/DR</td>
<td>humanitarian assistance and disaster relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KORMAR</td>
<td>Indonesian Marine Corps (Korps Marinir)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KOSTRAD</td>
<td>Indonesian Army Strategic Reserve Command (Komando Strategis Angkatan Darat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDA</td>
<td>maritime domain awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>noncommissioned officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA-N</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army-Navy (China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLRI</td>
<td>Indonesian National Police (Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>purchasing power parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCEP</td>
<td>Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROK</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBY</td>
<td>Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPRI</td>
<td>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNI</td>
<td>Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Military)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNI-AD</td>
<td>Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Darat (Indonesian Army)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNI-AL</td>
<td>Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Laut (Indonesian Navy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNI-AU</td>
<td>Tentara National Indonesia-Angkatan Udara (Indonesian Air Force)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Trans-Pacific Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAV</td>
<td>unmanned aerial vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAF</td>
<td>U.S. Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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1. Indonesia in the Context of U.S.-China Competition

This report is part of a broader RAND project that examines how the United States can work better with Indo-Pacific allies and partners to compete against efforts by China to assert regional domination. We look at the institutional challenges to and opportunities for closer cooperation with Indonesia’s military—referred to throughout this report by its commonly used acronym TNI (for Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or Indonesian National Military; the Indonesian Air Force is referred to as it is locally: TNI-AU, or Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Udara). In this report, we focus on four key analytical questions that will help U.S. planners formulate a successful strategy for maximizing engagement with Indonesia within the confines of what is realistically feasible:

1. What factors might provide a rationale for increased cooperation between the United States and Indonesia in responding to China’s more assertive behavior in the Indo-Pacific region?
2. What factors might mitigate expectations about Indonesia’s willingness to take sides regarding U.S.-China competition?
3. How do Indonesia’s formulators and implementers of security policy in the civilian and military spheres, as well as the broader public, view China, and how do they view Indonesia’s potential relationship with a rising China?
4. How does Indonesia view its relationships with other key nations in the Indo-Pacific arena, and how might such relationships serve to advance or set back U.S. strategic interests, such as competition with China?

As the United States seeks to expand its partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific region, there are few nations presenting greater upside potential than Indonesia. It has a military larger than that of any other potential new partner in the region other than India and Vietnam.\(^2\) It is the world’s fourth-most-populous country, containing the world’s largest population of Muslims. It encompasses a vast geographical space, comprising some 17,000 islands (900 of them inhabited) stretched out across 3,000 miles.\(^3\) As the most democratic nation in Southeast Asia, it shares many core American values. Its baseline national security interests are in close harmony with U.S. goals: For Indonesia, these interests include preservation of its sovereignty against encroachment by any would-be hegemonic power, such as China. Moreover, because of its

\(^2\) The only other Asian nations with larger militaries are China, North Korea, Russia, Burma, and South Korea. The first four are not potential partners, and the last is already a treaty ally. Pakistan also has a larger military than Indonesia, but for the purposes of this report is not considered “in region.”

\(^3\) If the uninhabited outcroppings that are above water only at low tide are included, the number of islands is well above 17,000; if only islands that are inhabited at least sporadically are included (for example, by fishing communities during periods of peak activity), then the count is closer to 13,000. The number of islands that are inhabited year-round is about 900. The number changes with climate, weather, and human activity.
relatively low baseline for current engagement, Indonesia has greater scope for deepening partnership than long-established treaty allies, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

But challenges that have precluded a deepened partnership in the past remain, in most cases, powerful impediments today. These include

- entrenched antiforeign sentiment in both military and civilian circles, along with a distaste for anything resembling a security “alignment” or “alliance”
- a strong desire to balance security engagement among a wide set of partners, including Russia and China, as well as the United States and a half-dozen other security providers
- a decisionmaking policy that is often slow and confusing
- a lack of sufficient funding for basic military requirements, contributing to and being adversely affected by persistent corruption
- relatively low levels of military capability vis-à-vis partners such as Japan or the ROK, as well as a lack of interoperability caused by the wide array of hardware used by TNI
- an institutional outlook focused more on domestic missions than on international action or defense against external threats.

Given these challenges, the United States should moderate its expectations of Indonesian cooperation in competition against a rising China.

U.S. policymakers must factor Indonesia’s problematic relationship with its ethnic Chinese population into planning for future U.S.-China competition. Suspicion about the motives and actions of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) runs deep in Indonesian policy circles: Many policymakers believe that the PRC attempted to stage a coup d’état against Indonesia’s government in 1965, using cells of Communist sympathizers that were frequently linked to the ethnic Chinese community. Each element of this conspiracy theory lacks sound historical basis, but the perception is nonetheless powerful. Partly in response to this perception, wealthy ethnic Chinese businessmen are deeply involved in a wide array of licit and illicit financial arrangements with TNI units and commanders: The purpose of such arrangements has little (if anything) to do with advancing the interests of the PRC or the ethnic Chinese community writ large and is primarily focused on preserving and advancing the financial interests of these businessmen. According to several sources interviewed, however, such financial arrangements have an outsized impact on Indonesia’s policy formation.\(^4\)

Indonesia’s desire to maintain balance among a wide array of partners works to the advantage of the United States, to some degree: Apart from China and Russia, all other important security partners of Indonesia are either U.S. allies (Japan, the ROK, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines) or emerging partners (India, Malaysia, Singapore). This means that the total pool of

\(^4\) The events of 1965—which, to a large degree, continue to fuel both TNI mistrust of the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia and that community’s perceived need to bolster its position through financial incentives—are discussed in Chapter 3. The specific licit and illicit financial arrangements are also discussed in Chapter 3.
security engagement favors the United States and its partners more than it favors China. It also means, however, that Indonesia’s level of interoperability with any one partner remains quite low.

Applying the Project Framework to Indonesia

The research team for this project developed a framework to be applied to each of the country case studies, highlighting major diplomatic, political, economic, and defense factors relevant to understanding the responses of key countries to China’s growing power and influence and to U.S.-China competition. The methodology of this framework is described in Appendix A.

Table 1.1 lists 14 variables we considered when assessing relative U.S. and Chinese influence. It includes eight indicators of shared interests and six measures of relative capabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Influence</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diplomatic and political</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>How diplomatically and politically important the United States or China is to the partner and the extent of diplomatic ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for U.S. versus Chinese vision for the region</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>How the partner’s views of the ideal regional order aligns with the U.S. vision for the region and U.S. values versus assessed Chinese vision and values for the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of U.S. commitment to the region</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>How confident (or not confident) the partner is about U.S. commitment or staying power in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public opinion</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Relative public perceptions of favorability of the United States versus China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>The partner’s current economic dependence on the United States versus China, measured by aggregating trade, investment, and tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic opportunity</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>How much the partner believes the United States versus China can provide future economic benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat perceptions of the United States versus China (economic)</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>How much the partner views U.S. or Chinese economic influence as potentially threatening, subversive, or coercive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to work with the United States versus China based on economic threat perceptions</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Whether the partner’s economic threat perception encourages it to work more with the United States or China to balance against the other economically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military and security</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>How much the partner views the United States or China as a military or security threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat perceptions of the United States versus China (military)</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>How much the partner views the United States or China as a military or security threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to work with the United States versus China based on military threat perceptions</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Whether the partner’s military threat perception encourages it to work more with the United States or China to balance against the other militarily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like the other reports that are part of this broader project, this report examines the evolution of this set of variables over a period of roughly a decade and projects how developments in these areas might unfold over the next five to ten years. The project focused on examining these variables across these periods to explore the impact of growing Chinese power and influence and the intensification of U.S.-China competition on the views and policies of U.S. allies and partners as they adjust their approaches to the United States, China, and the region. Figure 1.1 provides our findings and displays these assessments with respect to Indonesia in 2018. The assessments depicted use the information and analysis in the following chapters. Given the mix of qualitative and quantitative variables, the study uses five categories and corresponding colors to capture the broad differences in influence:

- **Significantly more U.S. influence** (blue): The United States has significantly more influence than China. For the quantitative variables, this is coded as a greater than 20 percent U.S. advantage in influence compared with China.
- **More U.S. influence** (light blue): The United States has moderately more influence than China. For the quantitative variables, this is coded as a 3 percent to 20 percent U.S. advantage.
- **Similar U.S. and Chinese influence** (gray): The United States has similar levels of influence as China. For the quantitative variables, this is coded as the United States has influence within 3 percent of Chinese influence.
- **More Chinese influence** (light red): China has moderately more influence than the United States. For the quantitative variables, this is coded as a 3 percent to 20 percent Chinese advantage.
- **Significantly more Chinese influence** (red): China has significantly more influence than the United States. For the quantitative variables, this is coded as a greater than 20 percent Chinese advantage.

Please see Appendix A for more-detailed coding of each variable.

Figure 1.1 presents the coding of relative U.S. versus Chinese influence. The figure highlights the relatively modest advantage enjoyed by the United States in competition for diplomatic and political influence: Indonesia regards the United States as a friend rather than an adversary—but a rather distant and potentially unreliable one; China, by contrast, is regarded as
a potential adversary (particularly over the Natuna Islands) but also as the regional hegemon and a source of enormous economic investment. The analysis in this report shows greater support for the U.S. vision for the region than for the Chinese vision: Indonesia sees China as seeking regional dominance, whereas it does not have similar concerns about U.S. goals. However, this sympathy for U.S. vision does not necessarily translate to a willingness to cooperate with the United States in advancing this vision: Indonesia remains highly averse to “blocs” or other forms of great-power competition. On the question of U.S. commitment to the region, however, Indonesia remains skeptical. Public opinion polling puts the United States and China approximately on par, but this is a complex issue: Many Indonesians (particularly in military circles) retain a high level of distrust toward both China and ethnic Chinese Indonesian citizens, stemming from a poorly understood conspiracy (and subsequent anti-Chinese pogroms) in 1965. This distrust is balanced, however, by these targets’ economic clout, proximity, and influence operations, described later in this report.

The balance of economic influence is quite different. Figure 1.1 highlights China’s decisive advantages in the economic arena. As discussed in Chapter 3, China is the single largest market for Indonesia’s exports (13.7 percent) and is an even larger source of its imports (21.9 percent). As a source of direct investment, China ranks behind only Singapore and Japan. U.S. investment, trailing that of Malaysia and South Korea, is only one-half that of China, without even factoring in the investment from Hong Kong (which ranks fourth). On willingness to work together and economic independence, China scores strongly higher. China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has either funded or been proposed as a funder for many much-needed infrastructure projects. The Indonesian government has even said that it sees China (specifically, the government-linked Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) as its preferred source of funding for an ambitious $31 billion project to construct a new capital city.5

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5 When asked about how to fund the move from Jakarta to a new site in Kalimantan, Deputy Minister for Infrastructure Affairs Kennedy Simanjuntak stated, “I will go first to the AIIB [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank].” The AIIB’s president, Jin Liqun, stated, “If the government is interested in engaging us, we’d be very happy to provide support.” Stefania Palma, “Indonesia Eyes China-Backed AIIB to Fund New Capital City,” Financial Times, December 1, 2019.
In military and security terms, Figure 1.1 illustrates a clear U.S. advantage. Although Indonesia retains significant aversion to any formal security alliance, it views the United States as its most important partner and China as its only serious security challenge. This view, however, does not translate into eagerness to work closely with the United States on security issues or to join U.S.-led security initiatives, such as freedom of navigation operations.
(FONOPs) in the South China Sea. Indonesia sees the United States as far more militarily capable than China but continues to hold significant doubts about whether the United States could be relied on in the event of a conflict.

Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 describes Indonesia’s geostrategic importance, its institutional outlook in foreign relations, and its strong desire to maintain “nonalignment” in its diplomatic relationships with the United States, China, and the other countries in the region. Chapter 3 outlines China’s dominant position in the Indonesian economy, as well as the counterbalancing influences of anti-Chinese sentiment and the behind-the-scenes influence operations by Chinese business interests, and provides brief country-by-country sketches of Indonesia’s relationships with its key regional neighbors. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of how the issues discussed in prior chapters—in the diplomatic, political, economic, and security arenas—are likely to play out over the next five to ten years and assesses the key facts that U.S. policymakers will need to take into account when formulating strategy, including the factors limiting closer engagement between the United States and Indonesia, and areas where engagement might be more feasible. Chapter 5 offers options for the U.S. government, as well as for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Air Force (USAF).
Indonesia’s Geostrategic Importance

Size, Geography, Democracy

The sheer geographic and demographic scope of Indonesia makes it a tantalizing prospect for U.S. security engagement (Figure 2.1). Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis was very enthusiastic about the potential for such engagement, seeing Indonesia as an underused partner.\(^6\) The following data points show why:

- Indonesia is the fourth-largest nation in the world, with a population of 261 million.
- Indonesia has the world’s largest Muslim population, with 229 million (more than Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Libya, and all of the Gulf Emirates combined).
- Indonesia’s landmass covers more than 1 million square miles, stretched out over an area nearly 3,000 miles long. It has nearly 34,000 miles of coastline.
- Indonesia has the largest economy in Southeast Asia. Its gross domestic product (GDP) is $3.25 trillion when measured by purchasing power parity (PPP)—the seventh largest in the world by PPP.\(^7\) Its GDP per capita is $12,400 (in PPP), making it a middle-income country. According to one respected economic forecast, it is projected to be the world’s fourth-largest economy within three decades.\(^8\)
- Indonesia is the largest and most influential member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has its Secretariat in the capital city of Jakarta. In addition to its own assets, Indonesia’s position as the focal point of ASEAN can potentially lead to greater cooperation among the other nine members: Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and Brunei.

As an archipelago composed of thousands of islands (many of them strategically located near the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, and other key areas), Indonesia presents a wealth of potential sites for air and naval access.

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\(^7\) Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook: GDP (Purchasing Power Parity),” webpage, undated. All figures are from 2017.
In addition to its advantages of geography and demographics, Indonesia offers a shared platform of democratic values. A quarter-century ago, Indonesia was one of the least democratic countries in its region: It had been a military dictatorship for a generation, and a highly corrupt one at that. When Transparency International launched its initial rankings of global corruption in 1995, Indonesia ranked last out of all nations surveyed.\(^9\) By 2018, it had risen to 89 out of 190:

just above the midpoint.¹⁰ This transition did not happen by accident: It was the direct result of democratization, and it makes Indonesia a much better partner today than in the past.¹¹

From the perspective of a U.S. security partner, a firmly established democracy provides several major advantages. First, it ensures that the government will not be too far out of step with the sentiments of the populace: Partnering with a fragile, out-of-touch regime has proven harmful for U.S. interests in such countries as Iran under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and South Vietnam under Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. Second, since the passage of the Leahy Law in 1998, it is illegal for the U.S. government to provide military assistance to units of foreign militaries that have engaged in unremediated abuse of human rights.¹² Historically, such abuses have been more prevalent, and remediation has been more difficult, in nondemocratic governments than in democratic ones. This was certainly the case in Indonesia, which is still legally prohibited from receiving certain types of assistance because of incomplete remediation of human rights abuses perpetrated during the Suharto years by its Kopassus (special forces) units.

**Institutional Outlook**

*Shared Interest in Maintaining a Rules-Based International Order*

Despite the anodyne rhetoric in its doctrinal *Defense White Paper 2015*, or *Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia 2015* (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4),¹³ Indonesia views China’s increasingly aggressive stance throughout the region with concern. The cause of this concern is Indonesia’s intense protectiveness about its sovereignty and territory, against which it sees China as the most plausible threat. Every nation zealously defends its territorial sovereignty, but Indonesia takes this more seriously than many nations with considerably greater near-term territorial threats.

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¹¹ For a discussion of how this transition occurred and the role played by the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, or Indonesian corruption eradication commission, see Jonah Blank, “How the (Once) Most Corrupt Country in the World Got Clean(er),” *The Atlantic*, May 2, 2019b.

¹² The first version of the Leahy Amendment was passed in 1997 but referred only to counternarcotics assistance. This prohibition was extended the following year to all assistance funded by the State Department, which includes such forms of security assistance as foreign military financing and many types of military education and training. Michael J. McNerney, Jonah Blank, Becca Wasser, Jeremy Boback, and Alexander Stephenson, *Improving Implementation of the Department of Defense Leahy Law*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1737-OSD, 2017.

¹³ For example, Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, *Defense White Paper 2015*, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2015, p. 83: “China is a strategic partner that is organized in the context of Indonesian national interests to build defence capability and the handling of common security issues”; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia [Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia], *Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia 2015* [Defense White Paper 2015], Jakarta, Indonesia, 2015, p. 77: “RRT merupakan mitra strategis yang diselenggarakan dalam konteks kepentingan nasional Indonesia untuk membangun kemampuan pertahanan dan penanganan isu-isu keamanan bersama kedua negara.”
This attitude may be caused, in part, by its colonial history, the large number of islets it has to defend, and a fear that, if the multiethnic nation were ever to start unraveling, it might be reduced to only the core of Java and Sumatra. Whatever the cause, Indonesia is very sensitive to perceived threats to its sovereignty. Indonesia has unresolved border disputes with Malaysia; it has never forgiven Papua New Guinea for declining to join the Indonesian union after decolonization; and it still smarts over Timor-Leste’s independence in 2002. But none of these present the threat that China does.

Although the risk of a large-scale Chinese invasion is negligible—and the threat of a subversive insurgency sponsored by the PRC is even less likely—China remains the only truly plausible external threat to what Indonesia considers its sovereign territory. If it wished to do so, China could overcome Indonesia’s military with the same ease that Japan’s military ousted the colonial Dutch during World War II. As one Ministry of Defense official put it, with a touch of understatement, “China’s ability to invade Indonesia is quite huge.”

Indonesia defends its sovereignty as vigorously as possible. The most obvious flashpoint for confrontation with China in the near future appears to be the Natuna Islands, which fall just outside China’s “Nine-Dash Line” but whose territorial waters extend within the area over which China claims economic and political control (Figure 2.2). The techniques China employs to undermine Indonesia’s claims for an exclusive economic zone are similar to some of those it employs in the disputed territories of the South China Sea: Most notably, it sends fishing vessels to trawl in waters that are part of the exclusive economic zone claimed by Indonesia around the Natunas, thereby “operationally implying” that it does not treat these claims as legitimate. The coast guard vessels that sometimes accompany the fishing boats are, according to Indonesian Navy reports relayed by personnel in Jakarta, often more capable than the naval warships of the Indonesian Navy (Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Laut, or TNI-AL).

In March 2014, in response to such Chinese challenges, Indonesia announced that it had initiated upgrades to its Riau Island airfield at Ranai to make it accessible by Su-27 and Su-30 aircraft. It is planning to deploy a Sukhoi squadron on the Natuna Islands. The 2015 defense white paper barely mentions the Natunas, but it does note the need to increase the development of a defense force for both the Natunas and the Merauke territory (a disputed area in Papua). As a Western diplomatic source in Jakarta put it, “Indonesia is focused only on its own interests—

14 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
15 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
16 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
17 Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 39: “peningkatan pembangunan kekuatan pertahanan negara”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 42; “increase of the development of defence force.”
the South China Sea and rules-based order is only relevant to the extent that it has a knock-on effect in the Natunas.”

In 2016, to highlight the issue after Indonesian warships stopped Chinese vessels for illegal fishing, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo made a high-profile trip to a TNI-AL warship off the coast of Natuna Besar—even holding a cabinet meeting onboard. The gesture was meant to signal more-aggressive action, and it accomplished the goal. Between 2014 and 2016, there had been a decided uptick in Chinese incursions; after the visit by Jokowi, these incursions reportedly tapered off. Jokowi’s decision to rename a stretch of nearby ocean the “North Natuna Sea,” however, drew a rebuke from Beijing.

For some observers, however, the importance of the Natunas lies more in economics than in sovereignty. “They’re very focused on fishing,” said an American source who deals regularly with the Indonesian Ministry of Defense. “They’re constantly asking us for information on

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18 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
20 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
21 Indonesia’s position is that this area falls within its exclusive economic zone and is not part of the South China Sea; China’s position is that this area is part of the South China Sea. In August 2017, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly protested that “Indonesia’s unilateral name-changing actions are not conducive to maintaining this excellent situation.” “China Demands Indonesia Drop New Name for Natuna Waters,” Jakarta Post, September 3, 2017.
illegal fishing in the Natunas—not only by China, but also by Vietnam.”

It is surely not coincidental that Fisheries Minister Susi Pudiastuti saw her popularity shoot up when she began burning and blowing up vessels that were caught fishing in Indonesia’s waters.

Uneasiness with Intensifying U.S.-China Competition

Given that Indonesia’s most serious current territorial dispute is with China, and that the PRC is the only nation that poses any realistic threat to Indonesian sovereignty, U.S. strategists might be tempted to assume that Indonesia would welcome intensifying competition between Washington and Beijing. Such an assumption, however, would be painfully wrong. “We won’t be part of an alliance to confront anyone,” said one Indonesian analyst. “Indonesians wince at the thought of U.S.-China competition,” said a U.S. military official in Jakarta. “They don’t like being sandwiched between two great powers. They didn’t like it during the Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and USSR, even though they were on our side. And they don’t like it now.”

Another U.S. military officer, interviewed in Singapore during the Shangri-La Dialogue, was equally blunt: “We can’t compete with China—the only area in which we’re superior is military, and that’s exactly the arena where all the nations of the region do not want a contest.” As an Indonesian Ministry of Defense official put it, “We are free and independent. There is an East Bloc and a West Bloc, and we are in the middle.”

Indonesia’s formal security doctrine is not publicly articulated in great depth. There has been some nondiarchal governmental discussion specifically addressing the concept of Indonesia as the region’s premier maritime security provider, most importantly in what Jokowi described in 2014 as the Global Maritime Fulcrum (in Bahasa Indonesia, Poros Maritim Dunia).

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22 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10. Another American source said that Vietnamese boats now count for a clear majority of illegal fishing, not just in the Natunas but around the region; interview on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2. An Indonesian security analyst said that the message of Jokowi’s warship visit was first to send a warning to China, but the second, third, and fourth points were “economic development, economic development, economic development”; interview on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12. A non-American diplomat made the same point: “Why do they care about the Natunas? It’s not about international law. It’s all about fishing”; interview on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.

23 Jeffrey Hutton, “This Tattooed Indonesian Fisheries Minister Will Blow Your Mind (and Maybe Your Boat),” South China Morning Post, November 26, 2017.

24 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12. For a discussion of why this is so, see Zhou Dong-chen and Muhammad Raihan Ronodipuro, “China’s Relations with Indonesia Requires More Cautious Moves,” Modern Diplomacy, December 23, 2019.

25 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1. An Indonesian uniformed officer seemed to visibly wince when the question was put to him. “We have,” he said carefully, “a different ideology from that of China.” Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.


27 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.

28 Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. ix.
designation, and Indonesia’s national security interest in it, were codified in Presidential Regulation 16 of 2017 on Maritime Policy of Indonesia. The document is not overly specific: “The World Maritime Fulcrum is Indonesia’s vision to be a sovereign, advanced, independent, and powerful maritime country, and be able to make positive contributions to regional and global security and peace, in accordance with its national interest.” This concept has been fleshed out and discussed to some degree in both Indonesian and Western sources.

The most authoritative document is the Indonesian Ministry of Defense’s Defense White Paper [Buku Putih Pertahanan], the most recent version of which was published in 2015. In this work, China is not portrayed as a threat to Indonesia: It is mentioned only five times in the 148-page document, and four of these references are to security cooperation between Beijing and Jakarta. The last mention is a vague and balanced reference to superpower rivalry in the region: “developments [which] need to be observed and affect the security and stability [of Asia] are China’s economy and military policies, strategic policy of the United States (US) in the region, and South China Sea disputes.”

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31 Security cooperation between Indonesia and China: Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 83; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 77. The United States and China as regional rivals: Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 7; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 7. In addition to the five mentions of the PRC, there are seven mentions of “China” in the place-names “South China Sea” and “East China Sea.” In Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, the nation is referred to as Tiongkok (the PRC is Republik Rakyat Tiongkok, and the place-name used for the oceans is Cina: Laut Cina Selatan and Laut Cina Timur are the South China Sea and East China Sea, respectively.

32 Here, and in other direct quotations from the 2015 defense white paper, the grammar has sometimes been corrected slightly to avoid peppering the official translation with indications of “[sic],” which would serve to distract the reader and might appear to cast the Ministry of Defense in a bad light. These grammatical corrections have been made by comparing the Indonesian government’s official English version (Defense White Paper 2015) with the official Bahasa version (Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia 2015). In cases in which grammatical corrections have been made in the text, both the uncorrected English and Bahasa official versions are provided in footnotes. (Where no edits are made, the English version is cited first.)

33 Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 7: “Perkembangan yang perlu dicermati dan berpengaruh terhadap stabilitas keamanan adalah kebijakan ekonomi dan militer Tiongkok, kebijakan strategis Amerika Serikat (AS) di kawasan, dan sengketa di Laut Cina Selatan”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 7: “The development needs to be observed and affects the security and stability is China’s economy and military policies, strategic policy of the United States (US) in the region, and South China Sea disputes.”
The South China Sea dispute is likewise described in terms that seem to place China and the United States on precisely equal footing:

South China Sea disputes have the potential to become an (open) armed conflict caused by: the parties involved in the South China Sea disputes who use the military instrument to strengthen their claim [i.e., China], the involvement of countries outside the region in the conflict [i.e., the U.S.], and there being no institution or credible international organization in resolving the dispute.\textsuperscript{34}

The document makes clear that Indonesia does not see the South China Sea dispute as a matter of its national interest: “In the South China Sea issue, Indonesia is not a claimant state. Indonesia conducts its external and internal policies [in order] to realize a peaceful regional [solution], [and urges] each country involved [to] refrain from any [hostile] action.”\textsuperscript{35} The closest that the document gets to an explicit expression of concern about China’s military intentions is the following highly elliptical statement: “Chinese economic growth enables the country to modernize its military. This condition prompts speculation and varied responses from countries in the region, and it also creates worries about the military balance; thus, it can be a security dilemma for countries in the region.”\textsuperscript{36}

Some Indonesian policymakers try to downplay concerns about U.S.-China competition or even try to portray it as an opportunity rather than a challenge. In June 2019, Siswo Pramono, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Center for Policy Development and Analysis, pitched the competition as a net positive for all of ASEAN: “We don’t have to ‘choose’ . . . because we have the pie. The pie is our strategic position and rapidly growing regional market . . . The market is here, people are here. We don’t have to care what U.S. or China says—it’s up to us.”\textsuperscript{37}

Most Indonesian sources interviewed, however, saw U.S.-China competition in decidedly less optimistic terms. As one scholar put it, “We don’t want to be a battleground. This comes

\textsuperscript{34} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 8; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 7–8.

\textsuperscript{35} Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 4: “Dalam isu Laut Cina Selatan, Indonesia bukan merupakan claimant state. Indonesia melakukan kebijakan secara eksternal dan internal guna mewujudkan situasi kawasan yang damai serta masing-masing bisa menahan diri”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 4: “In the South China Sea issue, Indonesia is not a claimant state. Indonesia conduct external and internal policies to realize a peaceful regional, as well as each country’s involved could refrain from any action.” Given the proximity of the Natunas to the South China Sea—and the fact that the Natuna’s exclusive economic zone crosses the Nine-Dash Line—such a distinction can seem to be one of semantics. But in the South China Sea, many such distinctions are.

\textsuperscript{36} Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 4: “Tiongkok dengan pertumbuhan ekonomi yang tinggi memungkinkan negara tersebut melakukan modernisasi militernya. Kondisi tersebut menimbulkan spekulasi dan tanggapannya beragam di negara-negara dalam kawasan dan kekhawatiran terhadap keseimbangan militer, sehingga, dapat menjadi dilema keamanan bagi negara-negara di kawasan”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 7: “Chinese economic growth enables the country to modernize its military. This condition makes speculation and varied response coming from countries in the region and it also creates worry about the military balance, thus, it can be a security dilemma for countries in the region.”

from our colonial experience—for centuries we were a battleground for the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English, the Japanese.” She noted that this aversion was not limited to Indonesia but extended throughout Southeast Asia: “We all have a long history of being used as pawns.”

An Indonesian Ministry of Defense official suggested that his nation’s experience with former enemies could serve as an example to the United States and China: “We were occupied by the Dutch, and also by the Japanese—but now we are good friends with both. The U.S. and China cooperated with each other in World War II: Why can’t they do so again?”

Indonesia’s Desire for “Nonalignment” in Diplomatic and Political Relations

Indonesia’s security doctrine was laid out in 1945 and has not changed since: Almost every formulation of Indonesian foreign policy refers either to the 1945 Constitution or to the same sentiment of nonalignment expressed more succinctly in 1948 by founding Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Mohammad Hatta. Hatta’s declaration has come to be the widely cited text: “The best policy to adopt is one which does not make us the object of an international conflict. On the contrary, we must remain the subject who reserves the right to decide our own destiny.” This formulation is known as mendayung antara dua karang [rowing between two reefs]. The precise statement, word for word, was recited back to interviewers by sources in meetings with Indonesian Ministry of Defense officials and with Indonesians outside of government.

At the Bandung Conference of 1955, 29 newly decolonialized nations from across Asia and Africa came to Indonesia to pledge independence (at least in theory) from both the Western and Soviet blocs. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the term nonalignment became somewhat outdated, but it is still widely used in Indonesia. One colonel in the Indonesian Army (Tentara Nasional Indonesia-Angkatan Darat, or TNI-AD) quoted former President (and former TNI General) Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who said that one enemy is too many, and a thousand friends are too few.

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38 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
39 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
40 The text of the constitution does not outline nonalignment as clearly as the Hatta declaration, but the concept is embedded throughout its preamble. Government of the Republic of Indonesia, Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, trans. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, 1945.
41 Hatta delivered these words on September 2, 1948, to a session of the Working Group of the Central National Committee of Indonesia, meeting in Yogyakarta. Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Washington, D.C., “Indonesia’s Foreign Policy/The Principles of the Foreign Policy,” webpage, undated b.
42 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13; interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12. Non-American interlocutors report similar statements referring either to 1945 or 1948 (interview on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11).
43 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
The attitude of nonalignment can be applied to China as readily as to Western powers, sometimes with the same anticolonialist rationale. “Colonialization started with trade,” said one Ministry of Defense official. “At first, it seemed unthreatening—but then it led to political rule, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch. We want to make sure that doesn’t happen again with the Chinese.”\textsuperscript{44} A scholar suggested that Sukarno’s fall from power in 1965 was caused by his abandonment of the Hatta formulation in favor of a Beijing-Hanoi-Jakarta axis. The same rationale can be a pathway for the future: “When the U.S. became too demanding in its conditions for aid, we told them to go to hell,” she said. “We can do the same with China.”\textsuperscript{45}

From the standpoint of U.S.-China competition, the most noteworthy result of this nonaligned attitude is Indonesia’s policy of balancing its security partnerships among as wide a field as possible. This means the United States is competing not only against China (as well as rival Russia) but also against its allies and partners, such as Australia, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, India, and several European nations.

“We’re the envy of most of our partners here,” a U.S. official in Jakarta said. “Even the Australians covet the scope of our operations. But we’re at the upper end of the bandwidth of what the Indonesians are willing to do.”\textsuperscript{46} He noted that Indonesia was increasingly open to trilateral engagements, which represents a major shift: TNI even proposed a trilateral with U.S. marines stationed at Darwin in northern Australia, but it had not been finalized as of this writing.\textsuperscript{47} “They’re pretty busy folks, eager to engage with lots of partners,” the official said. “We kind of saturate the market, for all three services—we have one major exercise with the Army, Navy, and Air Force each year. It’s hard to see them letting us do more.”\textsuperscript{48}

A U.S. official from another service agreed with that assessment: “We could do a lot more, but the biggest obstacle is Indonesia’s need to be seen as nonaligned. The problem is that nobody comes to them as much as we do: China, Russia, and the rest just can’t keep up.”\textsuperscript{49} In the naval arena, “Indonesia doesn’t do ‘mini-lats’—multilateral is \textit{everything}. They’ll do a mini-lat on something site-specific, like the Sulu Sea or Malacca Strait, but they won’t sign up for anything long term: For them, that would feel too much like an alliance.”\textsuperscript{50}

This policy of nonalignment makes interoperability with the United States (or any other military) very difficult, and this condition will not go away soon. An Indonesian Ministry of

\textsuperscript{44} Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
\textsuperscript{45} Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
\textsuperscript{47} The Indonesia-Australia relationship is discussed in greater detail later. For a brief discussion of the maritime angle (which could include Darwin marines), see Evan A. Laksmana, \textit{Reinforcing Indonesia-Australia Defence Relations: The Case for Maritime Recalibration}, Sydney: Lowy Institute, October 2018.
\textsuperscript{48} Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
\textsuperscript{49} Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
\textsuperscript{50} Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
Defense official acknowledged this but said that the upside of nonalignment was worth the inconvenience: “We have gear from the U.S., from Russia, from China, Spain, Brazil. Some of our equipment is calibrated in millimeters, some in inches. But we have experience under the Dutch and others, so we love our independence.”51

51 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
3. Indonesia’s Economic Relationship with China, and Country-by-Country Relationship Sketches

In economic terms, China’s outsize role in Indonesia’s economy is likely to prevent any alignment with the United States—even if such alignment was not already anathema. However, the Indonesian military holds deeply ingrained suspicions of ethnic Chinese citizens and of Communist ideology: These factors—along with sovereignty issues surrounding the Natuna Islands—make the possibility of any close partnership with Beijing very remote.\(^52\)

**China as Key Trade Partner and Export Destination for Indonesia**

Perhaps the most important reason for Indonesia’s discomfort regarding U.S.-China competition is the enormous impact that any conflict between these two nations would have on Indonesia’s economy. As a U.S. military official in Jakarta noted, “China seems to be focused more on economic issues than security ones. But that’s a real source of power and influence.”\(^53\) An Indonesian scholar put the matter more bluntly: “Why do we let the Chinese invest and trade here, despite our security concerns? Because we need the money.”\(^54\)

China is the largest market for Indonesian exports, comprising 13.7 percent of total exports (Japan is 10.5 percent, the United States is 10.6 percent, India is 8.3 percent, and Singapore is 7.6 percent). On the import side, China’s role is even larger, comprising more than one-fifth of Indonesia’s imports (21.9 percent); other top sources are Singapore (10.8 percent), Japan (9.0 percent), Malaysia (5.8 percent), and Thailand (5.7 percent).\(^55\) With foreign direct investment (FDI), China’s role is less dominant but increasing: Singapore is by far the largest investor ($9.2 billion in 2018), with Japan second ($5.0 billion) and China third ($2.4 billion). When China and Hong Kong (fourth, $2.0 billion) are combined, however, they nearly equal Japan’s investment.


\(^{53}\) Interview with U.S. military official on March 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 17.

\(^{54}\) Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.

\(^{55}\) All figures are for 2017—the most recent year for which World Bank figures were available. World Bank, “Indonesia Imports, Tariff by Country and Region 2017,” World Integrated Trade Solution database, accessed August 20, 2019.
The United States is far behind with $1.2 billion, trailing Malaysia and South Korea.\(^{56}\) In 2017, however, China surpassed Japan to take the second slot, and analysts predict that this ranking will reemerge in the future.\(^{57}\)

Such a position of dominance can breed resentment. There is a widespread public perception that Chinese firms are buying up huge segments of the economy, striking extortionate deals that will burden Indonesia with unsustainable high-interest debt and bringing in vast numbers of Chinese workers rather than hiring locally.\(^{58}\) Such perceptions are not irrational: Chinese firms have engaged in all of these practices elsewhere in Asia and in parts of Africa.\(^{59}\) But in Indonesia, such concerns seem to be significantly overblown.

According to a U.S. embassy official, wild estimates of the number of Chinese laborers brought to Indonesia specifically to work on Chinese-funded projects run as high as 6 million. The Indonesian Ministry of Manpower is reported to have registered 32,000 Chinese workers—out of 95,335 foreign workers in all.\(^{60}\) An internal TNI study (the U.S. embassy source says) put the actual number at only 600—a figure that he regards as credible.\(^{61}\) An Australian official notes that Chinese firms are legally prohibited from buying up Indonesian assets: Every venture has to be at least 50 percent Indonesian-owned, a rule that applies to Chinese firms as well as to long-settled Western oil and mining companies.\(^{62}\) In December 2018, even U.S.-based Freeport McMoRan, a mining giant that has been one of the largest and most powerful international businesses in the country since 1973, sold a majority (51.23 percent) stake in its Indonesia operations to the state-owned PT Inalum for $3.85 billion.\(^{63}\)

**Anti-Chinese Sentiment in the Indonesian Military**

There is little positive sentiment for China in any segment of any branch of the Indonesian military. “Our ideology is very different from theirs,” said a TNI-AD Colonel. “Ours is

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56 Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal [Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board], “Domestic and Foreign Direct Investment Realization: Quarter IV and January–December 2018,” Jakarta, Indonesia, January 30, 2019, p. 20. In October 2019, Indonesia’s Ambassador to the United States Mahendra Siregar suggested that the United States and Indonesia might have a shared economic interest, saying that China’s model “has placed a considerable burden on trading partners like Indonesia whose industrial base is very much based on free and fair competition.” Trevor Williams, “Ambassador: Indonesia Can Provide U.S. with a China Alternative,” *Global Atlanta*, October 3, 2019.


58 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.


61 Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.

62 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.

pancasila [the governing creed of the Indonesian Republic, mandating tolerance and patriotism], democracy, and religion. Theirs, well . . .” He left the rest unsaid.\textsuperscript{64} The army is particularly hard-set against China, as is the Indonesian Marine Corps (Korps Marinir, or KORMAR).\textsuperscript{65} Communism remains outlawed in the country, and Indonesia did not normalize relations with the PRC until 1990—more than a decade after the United States did.\textsuperscript{66}

According to Jakarta-based U.S. military and civilian officials, TNI does not like cooperating with its Chinese counterparts. “They see them as rude, offensive, and not very capable,” said one official.\textsuperscript{67} “Nobody in TNI wants to go to staff college in China,” said another. “They feel like they’re penned up with other foreigners there, and treated disrespectfully.”\textsuperscript{68} “The uniformed officers only engage with Chinese counterparts when they’re ordered to do so by political leaders,” said a third. “When they buy Chinese hardware, it’s mainly because it’s cheap.”\textsuperscript{69}

Unlike multiethnic nations such as the United States, India, or Singapore, Indonesia does not have a military that is ethnically representative of its population. There are very few ethnic Chinese troops in any branch of TNI, at any rank, and they typically are not trusted or promoted by their superiors.\textsuperscript{70}

This treatment might be understandable if the two nations had ever fought a war, but the degree of antipathy in this case stems largely from internal factors. Perhaps the most important factor limiting TNI-AD’s security engagement with China is its deep-seated fear and distrust of Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese population. These feelings stem largely from murky events in 1965: a conspiracy and subsequent bloodbath that have never been satisfactorily investigated or explained. In the midnight hours between September 30 and October 1, 1965, a group of military conspirators assassinated six top generals and claimed to have taken over the government to protect President Sukarno from a competing plot.\textsuperscript{71} The conspirators called themselves the 30

\textsuperscript{64} Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
\textsuperscript{65} Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
\textsuperscript{66} Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
\textsuperscript{67} Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.
\textsuperscript{68} Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
\textsuperscript{69} Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1. In the 21st century, China has been only the seventh-largest supplier of arms to Indonesia, and the trendline has not accelerated in the past decade (sales peaked in 2013 at a mere $75 million). Five nations—the Netherlands, Russia, South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom (UK)—each sold twice as many arms by value as China did during this period. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database,” undated a.
\textsuperscript{70} Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6. Ethnic Chinese citizens represent only about 1.2 percent of the overall population; Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook: Indonesia,” webpage, updated June 17, 2020. Their relative lack of representation in the TNI officer corps, therefore, owes at least as much to demographics as to discrimination. It is noteworthy, however, that this underrepresentation is not reflected in the world of business, where ethnic Chinese make up a substantial portion of the most important players.
\textsuperscript{71} At the time, the military was called Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia [Republic of Indonesia Armed Forces]. It was renamed Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI, in 1999, a year after the fall of Suharto.
September Movement (in Bahasa, Gerakan 30 September). The coup was crushed, and army commanders (led by Major General Suharto, then head of the Strategic Reserve) placed responsibility on the Communist Party of Indonesia (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI). The PKI was a legal political party, with membership numbering 2 million by contemporary U.S. State Department estimates and a long history of overt and successful participation in the political process. It was also, however, the military’s most potent domestic adversary, and its cadres were largely composed of ethnic Chinese citizens.

President Sukarno (who may well have instigated the plot himself in order to break the army’s power) was placed under protective custody, and the military launched a massive crackdown throughout the nation. Both the army and its array of informal civilian allies (organized as part of the military’s mass mobilization program) carried out executions throughout the country. A Central Intelligence Agency analysis put the number at 105,000, but other estimates range from 350,000 to 1.5 million. Evidence linking the PRC (let alone ethnic Chinese Indonesians) to the 1965 plot is highly speculative, at best, but belief in the linkage remains widespread today among TNI officers and much of the Indonesian populace. The PKI was obliterated in 1965, but many TNI officers believe (without evidence) that it still exists as an underground Beijing-backed movement, with cells throughout the nation.

The conflation of ethnic Chinese citizens (now estimated to number 8.3 million) with communism and the PRC continues. Since the upsurge in religious sectarianism in the early years of the post-Suharto era, anti-Christian sentiment has been added to the mix (much of Indonesia’s Chinese population is Christian, and vice versa).

These fears are very much a part of present-day politics. During the 2019 election, President Jokowi faced a “birther” campaign of disinformation spreading the false claim that he had at least one Chinese grandparent (as he had faced earlier in his career). His political rivals were more successful in attacking Jokowi’s ally, an ethnic Chinese Christian politician who succeeded...
him as governor of Jakarta. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, known both by his initials BTP and his Hakka Chinese nickname “Ahok,” was imprisoned on charges of blasphemy. In a mark of the potency of anti-Chinese (and anti-Christian) attitudes, Jokowi selected as his 2019 running mate a cleric who had led the protests leading to Ahok’s arrest.

In this environment, U.S. officials caution that efforts to enlist Indonesia to take a more active stance against the PRC might simply end up hurting Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese citizens. “How might ‘help us against China’ be interpreted?” one official asked. “Maybe as ‘go round up some Chinese people.’”76 He noted that the possibility of a repeat of 1965 is not out of the question: When Suharto fell in 1998, the initial reaction was a series of anti-Chinese riots in Jakarta, most likely instigated by regime supporters to detract attention from the dictator.77

“Nearly every social, cultural and religious organization in Indonesia has a youth wing, often a rowdy one,” the U.S. official said. “They’re not generally armed—but as we saw in Rwanda, it doesn’t take an armed populace to carry out a lot of killing.”78 An Indonesian analyst agreed: “It is dangerous for Beijing to meddle in Indonesia. If they do, it is our own Chinese citizens who will pay the price.”79

**Behind-the-Scenes Impact: China and Ethnic Chinese Business Interests**

Although the majority of ethnic Chinese Indonesians have little means to protect themselves from blowback, a small number of wealthy individuals—some with business interests linked to the PRC, others focused purely on their own financial concerns—have a great deal of influence. Large numbers of TNI officials, often the same ones expressing distrust of China and of ethnic Chinese, receive lucrative payments from these same sources: A concern about Beijing’s military goals does not translate into concern about accepting funds from ethnic Chinese business interests (whether Indonesian citizens or, at higher levels, PRC-based companies).

At the lower end of the scale, such gifts may be as innocuous as free meals at restaurants. But they add up. “All of the Chinese restaurants clustered around the TNI service academies give free meals to all the cadets,” reported an American official whose portfolio includes keeping track of foreign influences. “Let’s say you feed 1,000 cadets, and 100 of them remember. And let’s say 10 of them eventually become generals—your whole investment has paid off.”80 The chain of payoffs ranges from dinners to massive kickbacks. “Lots of TNI officers are getting wealthy off Chinese projects,” said a U.S. official tracking military affairs. He mentioned a well-
known hotel in central Jakarta, saying it is TNI-owned and was purchased with money fronted by ethnic Chinese Indonesians.\(^8^1\)

A particularly powerful practice, according to this official, is \textit{sponsorship}: A wealthy ethnic Chinese businessman often “sponsors” a stable of promising young TNI officers and accelerates their rise up the ranks. Initially, he helps them earn promotions, using previously sponsored officers to grease the skids. If they become flag officers, or even useful field-grade officers, he provides a steady stream of payoffs in return for facilitation and protection. Once they retire, particularly if they enter the political arena, he rewards them with lucrative business opportunities.

At the pinnacle of such activities is a set of families called the “Nine Dragons.” U.S. officials describe them in terms reminiscent of the Five Families of La Cosa Nostra. One figure mentioned by several interviewees is said to have bankrolled so many officers that TNI generals bow to him in public—and not just to him personally, but to his young son as well.\(^8^2\) “And [he] is not even one of the most powerful Dragons!” said one official. “There are plenty of older and wealthier ones who are more discreet about their activities.”\(^8^3\)

Figures such as these primarily look out for themselves: They should not be considered de facto agents for the PRC. But sometimes the line can be fuzzy. “Most of the Chinese community has no link to the PRC,” said a U.S. official who follows regional developments. “But as you get into transnational conglomerates, once you’re talking about billionaires, then there are transnational links and a complicated set of interests.”\(^8^4\) This official said he was “very concerned” about PRC influence: “It pervades all levels of the military, as well as the civilian government, right up to the most senior ones. There are generals and cabinet ministers with a personal financial interest in promoting closer ties with China.”\(^8^5\) A U.S. military official had a parallel concern at a different level: “China is now targeting local power brokers, both military and civilian, rather than those at the center. Because with all the devolution of power and funding, today that’s where a lot of the key decisions get made.”\(^8^6\)

Most observers agree on one point: If U.S.-China competition results in a backlash, it will not be Communist Party officials in Beijing or wealthy Indonesian Chinese in their penthouses who will suffer. “The rich guys won’t be touched,” said a U.S. official whose portfolio covers transnational crime. “It’ll all come down on the poor shop owner in Glodok [Jakarta’s Chinatown]. Just like it did in ’98. And then it’s back to business as usual.”\(^8^7\)

\(^{81}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.
\(^{82}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.
\(^{83}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 8.
\(^{84}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 8.
\(^{85}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 8.
\(^{86}\) Interview with U.S. military official on March 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 17.
\(^{87}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 7.
Country-by-Country Sketches of Indonesia’s Relations with Key Asian Nations

Given Indonesia’s strong sensitivity to any hint of alignment and its desire to maintain a balance among a wide array of nations, a close look at the language used in the 2015 defense white paper to describe its security partners is instructive. Not all of the language is necessarily meaningful, but Indonesia policymakers are adept at using nuanced rhetorical codes to send substantive messages: Subtle differences among second- or third-tier partners are probably less intentional than language used for first-tier ones, such as the United States, China, and Russia. Indonesia’s security partners are described as follows:

- Only the United States and China are referred to as “a strategic partner” (mitra strategis). This usage is identical in both the English and Bahasa texts.
- Russia, South Korea, France, Spain, and Singapore are referred to as “an important partner.”

The precise wording of the description of the relationship between the United States and Indonesia is substantively the same in the English and Bahasa versions. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 82: “Amerika Serikat (AS) merupakan mitra strategis dalam pengembangan kapasitas kelembagaan, kemampuan operasional, profesionalisme sumber daya manusia, dan modernisasi Alutsista”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 89: “The United States (US) is a strategic partner in the development of institutional capacity, operational capability, professionalism of human resources, and the weapon system modernization.”

The precise wording of the description of the relationship between Indonesia and China appears only once in the document. There is no substantive difference between the English version and the Bahasa version. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 77: “RRT merupakan mitra strategis yang diselenggarakan dalam konteks kepentingan nasional Indonesia untuk membangun kemampuan pertahanan dan penanganan isu-isu keamanan bersama kedua negara”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 83: “China is a strategic partner that is organized in the context of Indonesian national interests to build defence capability and the handling of common security issues.”

Interestingly, in the Bahasa version, Russia is referred to not as an “important partner” (mitra menjadi) but as a “longstanding partner” (mitra lama).

France is not typically thought of as a close security partner of Indonesia, but that may be changing. In addition to this statement in the white paper, a U.S. military official in Jakarta reported that “the French attaché is one of the busiest guys in town”; interview on March 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 17.

This characterization for Spain might be overemphasized: The relationship did not come up in any interview, and Spain ranks only tenth in Indonesian arms sales for the decade of 2008–2018. This is far behind three nations (Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands) that were not characterized as “important” and slightly behind one (Switzerland) that was not even mentioned in the white paper.

Singapore’s mention as an “important” partner is embedded in the following language: “Bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and Singapore is very closely because of both geographical and historical factors. The two countries are eternal neighbors so that security and stability in the region become a joint vital interest. Singapore is an Indonesian traditional partner in bilateral defence cooperation. This shows how important [emphasis added] the relationship [is] between the two countries in the defence field” (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia,
Japan\textsuperscript{95} and Thailand\textsuperscript{96} are described as having cooperation at a “very good” level.

Vietnam,\textsuperscript{97} Burma,\textsuperscript{98} Laos,\textsuperscript{99} and the United Arab Emirates\textsuperscript{100} are described as having a “good relationship” (hubungan yang baik or variants).

Timor-Leste\textsuperscript{101} is described (for one aspect of the relationship) as an “excellent partner.”

India\textsuperscript{102} and Pakistan\textsuperscript{103} are characterized as having “friendly relations.”

\textsuperscript{95} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 84. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{96} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 81. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 75. The Bahasa version uses the less emphatic baik for Japan, more emphatic sangat baik for Thailand. It is possible, however, that Thailand is overemphasized: The country did not come up in any interview and does not appear in the SIPRI database as having provided any military equipment for the decade of 2008–2018 (SIPRI, undated a).

\textsuperscript{97} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 82. Vietnam’s “good relationship” statement is embedded in the following: “bilateral relations between the two countries [are] based on the spirit of good neighborliness, mutual trust and understanding.” Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 76: “hubungan bilateral yang sudah ada antara kedua negara berdasarkan semangat bertetangga yang baik, saling percaya dan pengertian.”

\textsuperscript{98} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 80. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{99} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 80. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{100} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 94. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{101} The evaluation is limited to border security: “East Timor is an excellent partner in building strategic issues of border security” (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 82). In the Bahasa version, the term used is at the same level as that of Thailand (mitra yang sangat baik): “Timor Leste merupakan mitra yang sangat baik dalam membangun isu strategis keamanan perbatasan” (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 76). Given Indonesia’s historical animosity toward a nation to which it was essentially forced to grant independence in 2002, the “excellent” characterization seems more diplomatic than substantively meaningful.

\textsuperscript{102} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 85. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 79. Despite reports in the Indian press describing such a relationship as “comprehensive,” such language is not reflected in Indonesia’s doctrine—and there is little evidence of it having moved from the rhetorical to the operational sphere; Press Trust of India, “India, Indonesia to Upgrade Ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” Hindu Business Line, May 30, 2018.

\textsuperscript{103} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 87. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 80. The Bahasa version uses slightly different terms but with identical meanings: hubungan persahabatan for India and hubungan yang bersahabat for Pakistan. The use of substantively identical language for India and Pakistan, despite a clear disparity in engagement between the two nations, is almost certainly intentional. India is a much closer security partner, but Indonesia is sensitive to Pakistan’s position as the world’s most militarily capable (and only nuclear-armed) Muslim-majority nation.
• Australia\textsuperscript{104} and Papua New Guinea\textsuperscript{105} are characterized as having “dynamic” and “historical” ties, respectively.\textsuperscript{106}
• The UK\textsuperscript{107} is described simply as a “partner.”

\textsuperscript{104} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 88. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{105} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 89. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{106} It is probably not coincidental that these underwhelming terms are applied to Indonesia’s two direct neighbors, with which it has had long disputes over border issues. The characterization of Australia—a major security partner—in such terms is discussed later.
\textsuperscript{107} Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 91. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 85. This characterization undersells Indonesia’s security relationship with the UK, perhaps influenced in part by a brief colonial experience in the 19th century and tensions surrounding the refusal of Britain in the 1960s to permit Indonesia to absorb the territories that would become the independent nations of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. The UK was the fifth-largest supplier of arms for the decade 2008–2018, with sales of $691 million.
• Eleven nations—Brunei, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Germany, Serbia, Poland, Italy, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and Saudi Arabia—are mentioned without any adjective describing the relationship.

Russia

According to the 2015 defense white paper, “Russia is an important [in the Bahasa version, “longstanding”] partner in procurement of the main defence equipment of weapons systems, logistics, and technical assistance.” It notes that under a memorandum of understanding signed in 2003 and ratified in 2012, “The scope of cooperation includes the provision of military equipment and other related equipment, maintenance, repair, improvement and other technical services, [and] exchange of specialists to assist the implementation of joint programmes in the

111 Malaysia’s complicated relationship with Indonesia is described later. At the risk of reading too much into slight differences in wording, the Bahasa version uses the same term for security ties with Malaysia (lama, or “longstanding”) that it uses for Russia, although it does not describe these ties as a partnership (mitra): “Kerja sama bidang pertahanan dengan Malaysia telah berlangsung cukup lama [emphasis added] sejak ditandatanganinya perjanjian keamanan di wilayah perbatasan kedua negara pada tahun 1972” (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 74). The English version is more neutral: “Cooperation in the field of defence with Malaysia has been conducted since both countries signed the agreement of security in territory in 1972” (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 80). If this slight difference is deliberate, it may be because of the fact that Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia are essentially the same language, and Malaysian planners are likely to be the only foreign analysts reading the document’s Bahasa version more carefully than its English one.
112 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 90. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 84. Germany, despite the lack of recognition in the white paper, supplied $344 million (more than China) in arms to Indonesia for the decade 2008–2018 (SIPRI, undated a).
117 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 94. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 87. The downplaying of Indonesia’s relationship with the Netherlands probably is due to sensitivity about its colonial occupation. The Netherlands was the fourth-largest supplier of arms to Indonesia for the decade 2008–2018. Its sales of $751 million ranked behind only Russia ($880 million), South Korea ($857 million), and the United States ($796 million; SIPRI, undated a).
The importance of the relationship is due primarily (although not exclusively) to Russia’s status as the largest source of arms transfers to Indonesia from the fall of Suharto in 1999 through 2018. In the white paper, Russia is mentioned exactly the same number of times (five) as China is; Indonesian planners take notice of such things, so the parity may not be a coincidence. According to a U.S. military source in Jakarta, Russia is Indonesia’s second-most-preferred partner (after the United States). Another U.S. officer described Russia as a relief valve: If forced to choose between the United States and China, he said, Indonesia might end up picking Russia instead. Another U.S. official noted that Russia, unlike China, concentrates its engagement squarely in the security rather than the economic arena.

A December 2017 event prompted a considerable amount of attention from U.S. observers of the Indonesia-Russia security relationship: the visit of two Russian Tupolev Tu-95MS “Bear” bombers to an Indonesian air base at Biak in the state of Papua. This visit was supported by Ilyushin Il-78 tankers en route and two Ilyushin Il-76-MD transport aircraft that landed at Biak to support the engagement. A total of 110 Russian military personnel were reported to have taken part in the visit.

According to U.S. military personnel in Jakarta, this engagement could represent a significant moment in the Indonesia-Russia bilateral relationship. Although Russian naval vessels have docked at Indonesian ports in 2016 and 2017, this visit represented the first access granted to Russian strategic bombers. “This was great for the Russians,” said one official. “We’d like to know what Indonesia got out of it.” Despite Indonesia’s obsession with maintaining balance among its security partners, there has been no suggestion that USAF bombers would receive similar access: “We don’t get a sense that they’re trying to make it up to us,” said another American official. “We’d like to do a B-52 exercise, to balance the Russian’s ‘Badger’ or

120 In 2019, South Korea took over the top slot on a cumulative basis; SIPRI, undated a.
121 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4. Another U.S. official noted that even the rifles used by KORMAR are SS1s, most likely from Russia; interview on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
122 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
123 Interview with U.S. military official on March 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 17.
125 Interview with U.S. military official on March 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 17.
126 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
‘Bear’ one,” said a third. “If we did this, we could have an F-16 hand-off as part of the engagement.”

**Australia**

Despite deep and long-standing security cooperation between Indonesia and Australia, the 2015 defense white paper describes Indonesia’s neighbor to the south in terms that are less effusive than those used for other partners. This characterization probably has more to do with historical sensitivities (for example, lingering concerns of Papua and Timor) than present-day concerns: Australia has long been one of Indonesia’s closest security partners and (because of its geographic proximity) is perhaps the one with which Indonesia has the most direct stake in maintaining a good relationship (with the exception of Singapore).

The white paper cites the Lombok Treaty and an Action Plan for Defense/Defense Cooperation Agreement signed in 2012. The white paper states,

The scope of cooperation includes: the defense, law enforcement, counter-terrorism, intelligence, maritime safety and aviation security, prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, emergency response, international organizations related to security issues.

Additional detail about the relationship can be found by looking at the Australian side of the equation. Australia’s objectives for its relationship with Indonesia are encapsulated in Chapter Five, Section 12, of its 2016 Defence White Paper. Interestingly, the Australian document—published the year after its Indonesian counterpart—uses the same term “dynamic,” mirroring the Bahasa version’s dinamis, in reference to its shared geography: “We are neighbours in a dynamic region.” Specific points made by the Australian document include the following:

- It centers the countries’ common goals in the fact that they “share maritime borders and enduring interests in the security and stability of South East Asia.”

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127 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4. The public reports identify the Russian bombers as “Bears” (Tu-95MS), but this source raised the possibility that they may have been “Badgers” (Tu-16). Given this source’s expertise, it seems fair to regard this as an open question.

128 “Relations between Indonesia and Australia have been a long history partner since the Indonesian struggle for independence. In its development, the bilateral relationship has been very dynamic.” Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 88; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 81.

129 More formally, the Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and Australia on the Framework for Security Cooperation, signed in 2006. In addition, the white paper notes the Indonesia-Australia Defence Strategic Dialogue, the Australia-Indonesia High Level Committee, and the two-plus-two dialogue (i.e., meetings between defense ministers and foreign affairs ministers of both countries).


132 The 2016 Defence White Paper further notes that “[w]e have a mutual and abiding interest in the security and stability of the maritime domains that we share, the free movement or trade and investment through these domains, and countering terrorism and people smuggling in our region.” The document continues, “Australia welcomes
In addition to the Lombok Treaty and other vehicles noted in the Indonesian white paper, it cites the 2014 Joint Understanding on Intelligence Cooperation, Chief of the Defence Force High Level Committee, Indonesia-Australia Defence Strategic Dialogue, and talks for each of the individual services.\textsuperscript{133}

It lists existing areas of cooperation as counterterrorism, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping, and intelligence and outlines areas of current military educational partnership, including staff college exchanges, mobile training teams, and English language courses tailored to Indonesian requirements.\textsuperscript{134}

It promises “to support Indonesia as it modernizes its defence forces” through “more sophisticated training” and “expanding our comprehensive pattern of training, exercises and operations.”\textsuperscript{135}

The goals contained in Australia’s 2016 Defence White Paper are essentially restated in its 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. (It even refers to Indonesia, again, as “dynamic”—twice.)\textsuperscript{136}

This document omits references to some specifically security-related vehicles while mentioning economic and diplomatic ones not included in the 2016 Defence White Paper.\textsuperscript{137} The overall goals, however, run largely in tandem with the security document: “Our long-standing defence, counter-terrorism, law enforcement and intelligence cooperation will continue to help both countries respond to shared security challenges.”\textsuperscript{138}

An Australian official in Jakarta provided the following additional detail and texture to the information contained in the white papers and other related documents:\textsuperscript{139}

Indonesia’s increased focus on maritime affairs and Australia will seek greater cooperation in maritime security activities that contribute to a stable and prosperous region.” Australian Government, Department of Defence, 2016, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{133} Australian Government, Department of Defence, 2016, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{134} Australian Government, Department of Defence, 2016, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{135} It also promises “more frequent policy and planning dialogue; and intelligence exchanges,” and states that future efforts to increase cooperation “will include a new joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise.”

Australian Government, Department of Defence, 2016, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{136} Australian Government, 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, Canberra, Australia, November 2017, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{137} These include the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement under negotiation, opening consulates in Surabaya and Makassar, and increasing development programs. Australian Government, 2017, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{138} The document also notes, “We will deepen cooperation on shared maritime interests including by working to counter illegal fishing, improve coordination and communications on search and rescue, and upgrade navy-to-navy links.” Australian Government, 2017, pp. 41–42. For another document that expresses essentially the same goals, see Australian Government, Department of Defence, “Joint Statement on the Sixth Indonesia-Australia Foreign and Defense Ministers 2+2 Meeting,” December 6, 2019.

• Australia’s equivalent of the Defense Attaché Office has a staff of ten, headed by a brigadier general.
• The two nations hold 18–20 exercises per year. Some exercises are biennial rather than annual: There are three biennial exercises in aviation, including an airlift exercise called Rajawali.
• There are 15 annual dialogues at the level of one-star flag officer or above.
• Australia reserves 150–170 service academy slots annually for Indonesian officers.
• There are some difficulties matching up services. For example, Australia’s amphibious capability is housed in its army rather than as a separate marines service; when dealing with the United States, Australia’s amphibious commanders talk to the U.S. Army, but they have not been able to figure out a way of setting up talks with Indonesia, since KORMAR is housed in the navy.¹⁴⁰

U.S. military and civilian observers in Jakarta note the strength and depth of security cooperation between Indonesia and Australia. “The Australians have the inside track,” said one. “They do a lot of operational exchanges.”¹⁴¹ Observers also note the historical legacy of distrust, which comes through more in the Indonesian documents than in the Australian ones. “In contrast with Asian nations like Japan,” said one U.S. civilian, “Australians are still associated with Dutch colonialism. They’re seen as having held back Indonesian independence and blocked the integration of West Papua—in a maximalist view, of East Papua as well.”¹⁴² Maritime border disputes between Indonesia and Australia lingered well into the 21st century.

One area of weakness in the Australia-Indonesia relationship is that of economics: The close security partnership is not undergirded by economic ties of similar scope. “There are no Australian infrastructure projects here,” said one U.S. observer.¹⁴³ In the business arena, an Indonesian analyst noted, “Australia is absolutely negligible.”¹⁴⁴ Even an Australian official noted that there was “not much business-to-business contact” between the two nations. “Compared with our very robust military, educational, and cultural ties,” he said, “the economic relationship lags.”¹⁴⁵ He noted, however, that Australia’s advantage comes not from the dollars it

¹⁴⁰ This incompatibility was also noted by a U.S. military observer; interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
¹⁴¹ Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
¹⁴² Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 7. The island of Papua (also known as New Guinea) divided in half during the colonial period, with the Netherlands occupying the western portion and Great Britain occupying the eastern half. In 1945, Indonesia claimed all territories formerly held by the Dutch, but West Papua was only integrated in 1962. The eastern half of the island was further divided in the late 19th and early 20th centuries between British and German rule. Britain transferred governance over its half to Australia in 1905; after World War I, the newly formed League of Nations gave Australia protectorate rights over the portion formerly held by Germany. The eastern half of Papua achieved independence as Papua New Guinea in 1975.
¹⁴³ Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 8.
¹⁴⁴ Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
¹⁴⁵ Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
spends but from the time. “We do a lot of unsexy things,” he said. “Our interest is sustained, we’re in it for the long term. Our depth is our strength.”

South Korea

The ROK is a somewhat surprising addition to Indonesia’s security partnership picture: Its importance is unrelated to history or geostrategic heft. Unlike Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, and the Philippines, it shares no borders (maritime or land). Unlike China, Russia, and the United States, it is not obligated to engage because of superpower status. Unlike the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, Portugal, and Japan, it has never occupied any territory that Indonesia either possesses or seeks to possess.

The 2015 defense white paper notes that “South Korea has become an important partner of Indonesia in the development of defence capabilities and increase the professionalism of soldiers.” It cites elements of defense cooperation as including bilateral dialogues, exchange of scientific data and technology, personnel exchanges for education and training, joint research, logistical support, and defense systems procurement. This list highlights the importance to Indonesia not only of military hardware but also of modernization and the transfer of technology: In both areas, South Korea has proven itself a particularly valuable partner. This modernization and indigenization program is particularly important in light of Indonesia’s goal of building a “Minimum Effective Force.”

South Korea has quietly become the second-largest supplier of arms to Indonesia (after Russia), selling $857 million over the decade 2008–2018. Over the past two years, South Korea’s Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering firm has delivered two Nagapasa-class submarines to Indonesia: The first was delivered in August 2017, the second in April 2018, and a third craft was assembled in Indonesia and launched in April 2019. Indonesia has ordered three more of the 1,400-ton craft—a variant of the Type 290 diesel-electric attack submarine called Chang Bogo-class in South Korean terminology.

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146 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
147 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 85; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 78–79.
148 “The MEF [Minimum Effective Force] program is not intended to enlarge defence power, but to develop and modernize defence power to be more effective in military duties and peace missions” (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 106); “Program MEF tidak bermaksud memperbesar kekuatan pertahanan, tetapi bertujuan untuk mengembangkan dan memodernasi kekuatan pertahanan menjadi lebih efektif dalam melaksanakan tugas-tugas militer, termasuk tugas dalam misi perdamaian” (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 100).
149 SIPRI, undated a.
150 “Indonesia Orders Additional Three 1,400-Ton Submarines from South Korea,” Naval Today, April 12, 2019.
Indonesia and the ROK are already said to be cooperating in the cyber sphere, and the landing craft used by the KORMAR are made in South Korea. The two nations are jointly developing a fighter jet, the KF-X/IF-X, and Indonesia’s payment of $118 million to Korea Aerospace Industries in late 2018 suggests that the program is well underway.

The visible presence of South Korea in Indonesia is huge: Jakarta and other cities are filled with Korean restaurants, which may be the most popular nonlocal cuisine. K-Pop, South Korean popular music, tops the Indonesian charts and dominates social media. The ROK is very strongly represented in the foreign business community.

There is a small amount of local resentment toward Korean expatriates: Some are mistaken for Chinese and subject to the prejudices described above. But overall, South Korea’s positioning is enviable: It has a strong and growing place in Indonesia’s security partnership sector, a very large stake in the economic one, and a cultural positioning (with all of the associated “soft-power” benefits) that is perhaps greater than that of any other nation.

Japan

The position of Japan in Indonesia could be described as “South Korea, but less.” Japan has a more-operational security relationship than the ROK does, but its sales of military hardware are not significant enough to show up on the SIPRI register. The defense white paper calls Japan “a partner in intelligence cooperation, technical training, education and training, as well as cooperation in economy,” a clear step below the ROK as “an important partner.” It states, “The cooperation has been in very good level and it continues to be developed,” citing a May 2015 defense cooperation agreement for capacity-building, exchange of information, maritime security, HA/DR, cyberdefense, and military training.

Japan’s business presence is robust, and it has invested in infrastructure projects such as Jakarta’s Metro Mass Rapid Transit system. This investment has garnered some soft-power benefits but only to the (very limited) extent that the public is aware of it. Japanese firms, like Korean ones, are investing in Bahasa training for some of their managers. The extent to which this training represents a commitment for insular-minded Japanese companies can hardly be

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151 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
153 SIPRI, undated a.
154 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 84–85. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 77–78. Emphasis added to both statements. In the Bahasa version, South Korea is described as a mitra penting, and Japan is described merely as a mitra.
155 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 84. Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 78.
overstated. On the cultural side, Japanese restaurants are a staple of Indonesian urban life—but less so than Korean counterparts.

Unlike South Korea, Japan has a historical legacy in Indonesia—both positive and negative. On the positive side, Japan is portrayed in the history taught in Indonesian schools as a liberator: the Asian ally that helped free the country from the colonial Dutch in World War II. On the negative side, any Indonesian who lived through the occupation, or heard stories from a parent or grandparent, knows that this is an incomplete picture: The Japanese occupation was often exceptionally brutal, and not just to any Indonesians seen as collaborators. On balance, however, the official narrative seems to dominate public perceptions: Japan is regarded as a generally benevolent force and a nonthreatening partner in both the security and economic arenas.

India

In India’s view of the region, it is a near-superpower that serves to balance the influence of China for a variety of Southeast Asian nations—including Indonesia. This outlook is seen by most of these nations, including Indonesia, as aspirational at best. In the defense white paper, India is not portrayed as a “strategic partner,” an “important partner,” or even a “partner” at all. It is described merely as a nation with which Indonesia has “friendly relations”—exactly the same term as that applied to India’s rival (and a nation that does not share a maritime border with Indonesia) Pakistan. The document outlines the areas of cooperation in exceptionally vague terms: “increasing the production and field support services, projects related to defense equipment and components; improving cooperation between defense industries, technology transfer, technical assistance, training and joint production, [and] cooperation in defence science and technology through the exchange of personnel and joint projects.”

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156 Two anecdotal experiences from the author help illustrate this point. The first occurred in 1986 and 1987: As a full-time journalist and part-time teacher of English in Tokyo, the author did not encounter a single Japanese businessman considering learning Indonesian or any other Asian language: Even studying English was seen as somewhat frivolous, and the thought of spending time on an “inferior” language such as Bahasa would have been nearly incomprehensible. The second occurred in 2019, when the author was trying to improve his command of Bahasa at a language school in Yogyakarta: Several of the long-term students there were businessmen and diplomats from Japan who displayed a level of fluency that exceptionally few Japanese sararimen would ever have approached in earlier years.

157 Japanese food is limited to upper-middle-class and elite circles, while Korean food reaches nearly all strata of society: It spans the range from high-end, expense-account restaurants to fast-food joints found at every shopping mall. J-Pop (Japanese pop music) can be heard on Indonesian radio stations, but K-Pop is absolutely ubiquitous.

158 For a more detailed discussion, see Jonah Blank, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Angel Rabasa, and Bonny Lin, Look East, Cross Black Waters: India’s Interest in Southeast Asia, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1021-AF, 2015.

159 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 85, 87; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 79–80.

160 These areas are described in a 2006 agreement. Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 85–86; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 79.
Perhaps the most promising area of security engagement is maritime, which is unsurprising, considering that the nations have overlapping exclusive economic zones in the Bay of Bengal. Although the Indian mainland is more than a thousand miles from the closest point in Indonesia, India’s Andaman and Nicobar Islands (an uncontested part of the nation) are much closer to Southeast Asia than to the rest of the country. The southernmost point of Indian territory (Indira Point, on the island of Grand Nicobar) is only 101 miles from the northernmost point of Indonesian territory (Rondo Island, in the Sabang district of the province of Aceh).

In 2018, India was granted access to the port of Sabang, and Indian sailors reportedly have been seen there. According to U.S. observers, Indonesia views India as “a nonthreatening partner,” but “the relationship is surprisingly underdeveloped—lots of rhetoric, but very little substance.” Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Jokowi have exchanged official visits, but the security relationship and Indian investment in Indonesia both remain relatively light. Although Indian interlocutors like to remind Indonesian counterparts that their country was perhaps the first to recognize Indonesia’s independence and like to highlight the partnership of their respective founding leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sukarno, in creating the Non-Aligned Movement at the Bandung Conference of 1955, this relationship feels like ancient history for most Indonesians (despite their love of postcolonial narratives). A noteworthy data point: Unlike every other nation profiled in this chapter, and several other nations in the region, India has no direct commercial flight to any city in Indonesia.

Indonesian military officials interviewed for this report downplayed the importance of India in their calculations. When asked about Indian aftercare and upgrades for Russian military hardware, interlocutors said that this was not a matter of superior quality but merely geographical proximity. “The distributor for Sukhoi is in India,” one officer said. “If it were located in Malaysia, or East Timor, we’d go there just as easily.”

161 By way of comparison: All of the territory in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is closer to Burma (66 miles from closest point to Great Coco Island, about 400 miles to Yangon), Thailand (325 miles from closest point to Phuket), and Malaysia (450 miles from closest point to Kedah) than it is to the Indian mainland (one of the closest inhabited points is 714 miles, from Diglipur on North Andaman to Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh). All distances estimated at Distance Calculator, homepage, undated.

162 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.

163 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.

164 Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 8.

165 Before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic shut down many routes, there were direct commercial flights linking Jakarta (and other Indonesian cities) to Australia, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Brunei. There also were direct flights from Bali to Russia, Timor-Leste, and other nations. At the time of writing, there is no direct commercial flight from any airport in India to any airport in Indonesia; reported plans to introduce service notwithstanding, this appears to have been the case even before 2020.

166 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
Singapore

The city-state of Singapore occupies an unusual position vis-à-vis Indonesia: It is a close security partner, yet also (from Singapore’s vantage point) a potential adversary. Indonesia sees no threat from Singapore but is at least mildly galled by the fact that its tiny neighbor is so much more technically capable that it performs certain functions for Indonesia (for example, managing the Natuna Islands airspace) that most other nations would perform for themselves.

According to the 2015 defense white paper, “Bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and Singapore is very close, because of both geographical and historical factors. The two countries are eternal neighbors, so security and stability in the region are a joint vital interest.”

In an agreement signed in September 1995, Indonesia gave Singapore access for naval and air training in the Natuna Sea and surrounding areas. According to a U.S. observer, Singapore (with which Indonesia shares a maritime border) is one of the Indonesian Navy’s top relationships: They might be “the highest-end and most transparent” of TNI-AL’s regional partners, even if the Singaporeans feel overshadowed by the United States, China, and Russia. The fact that the Natunas airspace is managed by Air Traffic Control Singapore might rankle members of TNI-AU. But two U.S. observers—one military, one civilian, in separate interviews—questioned the capability of Indonesia to manage this airspace on its own.

Singapore is a very accessible place for Indonesians of various classes: The wealthier citizens go there for vacations, shopping, and medical care, while the middle class and some of the poorer citizens go there for temporary work. But Singaporean planners have not forgotten the attempts by Indonesia to absorb the city (along with the rest of Britain’s colonial territories in the Malay Archipelago) during the early 1960s. A U.S. military official in Singapore notes that the city-state wants F-35 fighter aircraft in part to deter any potential aggression from Indonesia.

167 It continues, “Singapore is an Indonesian traditional partner in bilateral defence cooperation. This shows how important the relationship between the two countries is in the defence field” (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 81); Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 75: “Hubungan kerja sama bilateral antara Indonesia dan Singapura sangat erat karena bukan hanya karena faktor geografis melainkan juga faktor sejarah. Kedua negara merupakan negara tetangga yang abadi sehingga keamanan dan stabilitas di wilayah ini menjadi kepentingan vital bersama, guna menjamin terlaksananya pembangunan diberbagai bidang dalam rangka meningkatkan kesejahteraan rakyat kedua negara.”

168 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 81; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 75.

169 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.


171 Interview with U.S. military official on May 9, 2019, Singapore. Source 19.
Malaysia

Of all the nations profiled in this chapter, Malaysia is the only one that might not be easily classifiable as a true partner for Indonesia. Its security relationship with Indonesia, however, is relevant to a consideration of U.S.-China competition in the region.

The 2015 defense white paper is rather circumspect in its description of Indonesia’s most intimate neighbor:

Cooperation in the field of defence with Malaysia has been conducted since both countries signed the agreement of security in territory in 1972. The defence cooperation of both countries is influenced by non-defence factors and border issues that have not yet been completed.172

The brief summary cites search and rescue operations at the border (presumably the maritime one), border security, and collaborative intelligence in the General Border Committee Malaysia-Indonesia.

At some level, Indonesia and Malaysia should be close partners: Most of their citizens speak essentially the same language, practice the same faith, and eat the same foods.173 Their military and civilian policymakers even have similar suspicions about their respective ethnic Chinese populations, about communism, and about the possibility of Beijing-sponsored subversion. In Malaysia’s case, the China-sponsored Communist insurgency, undertaken in large part by ethnic Chinese citizens, is a historical fact rather than a fantasy: Between 1948 and 1960, Beijing-backed militants carried out an insurgency against first the colonial British and then the newly independent nation of Malaysia; between 1967 and 1989, remnants of the rebel force carried out a much smaller guerrilla campaign with the sponsorship of the PRC until 1974.

Still, some Indonesians cannot understand why the nation of Malaysia should even exist. If Indonesia can encompass most of the territory once known as the Malay Archipelago, why should Malaysia remain separate? From 1963 to 1966, Indonesia conducted a policy it called konfrontasi [confrontation] aimed at decolonizing the British-, Dutch-, and Australian-held territories in the archipelago on Indonesia’s terms rather than those of the colonizers. The indigenous political leadership of colonial Malaya (as it was then called) were eager for de facto as well as de jure independence, but they did not wish to substitute British overlordship for that of their neighbors. This history underlies much of the current Indonesia-Malaysia relationship. In Indonesia’s view, it was merely offering fraternal assistance in an anticolonial movement. In Malaysia’s view, the move was anything but brotherly.

172 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 80–81; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 74.
173 Both Indonesia and Malaysia are highly diverse nations, with a wide array of ethnicities, faiths, and languages. But the official language of both nations—Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia—is essentially the same and is readily intelligible to most citizens of both countries (the language is Malay—even though most Indonesians are not ethnically Malay, the tongue has served as a link language for trade throughout the archipelago for centuries). Both nations are majority Muslim, and Islam has a status that is privileged (officially or unofficially) in both countries.
As one U.S. military observer suggested, “They’re like siblings. It’s got an element of rivalry, a love-hate relationship.” He noted that security cooperation between the two is deeper than the white paper might suggest: “They have impactful engagement.” How much does the rivalry affect their security decisions? “Indonesia has exactly one more Leopard tank than a certain neighboring state,” said an Australian observer. “That is not a coincidence.”

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174 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
175 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
4. Assessment and Outlook

In this chapter, we present an assessment of several key factors in the U.S.-Indonesia relationship that are relevant to the issue of U.S.-China competition and an outlook for the coming five to ten years. The picture we paint is largely a positive one, so long as American expectations are moderated by a proper understanding of the inherent difficulties of drastically stepped-up partnering. We highlight several key areas for increased engagement, including HA/DR, maritime domain awareness (MDA), and military education. We suggest that approaching Indonesia with increased displays of respect and patience will likely increase the chance of satisfactory outcomes.

Indonesia Sees the United States as Its Best Partner, but Limiting Factors Remain

Despite Indonesia’s strong desire to balance its security relationships, the United States remains its preferred partner. The 2015 defense white paper refers to the United States ten times—double the number of times it refers to China (or Russia). It states, “The United States (US) is a strategic partner [emphasis added] in the development of institutional capacity, operational capacity, professionalism of human resources, and the weapons system modernization.” The document highlights the following items as hallmarks of cooperation:

- Framework Arrangement on Cooperative Activities in the Field of Defense Between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia and Department of Defense of the United States of America, signed 2010 and enhanced with a joint statement dated October 26, 2015
- Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue
- U.S.-Indonesia Bilateral Defence Dialogue
- Military Assistance Program
- International Military Education and Training
- Foreign Military Sales
- Foreign Military Financing Program.

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176 This refers to the nation of China; it does not include purely geographical references, such as “South China Sea” or “East China Sea.”
177 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 89; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 82.
178 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 89–90; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 83.
TNI sees security engagement with China as less of a value-for-time proposition than similar engagement with the United States. According to U.S. and Indonesian military officials, TNI sees the United States as more transparent and more reliable than China. TNI buys Chinese gear that is inferior to U.S. equipment mainly because it is less expensive, but the pervasive corruption of Chinese arms sales results in far less effectiveness than a more transparent system. China is seen as providing poor maintenance and sustainment, if any at all. When Indonesian officers go to China for military education (according to a U.S. official in Jakarta), the language of instruction is English, and the students are segregated from their Chinese counterparts. “China’s military exchanges are just optics,” said an official from Indonesia’s Ministry of Defense. “They don’t care about building capability, which is what we care about. We don’t like to spend our money to pay for courses in China, when we end up gaining nothing from them.”

**Indonesian Concerns About U.S. Reliability**

Indonesian security planners frequently express concern about U.S. reliability as a partner. Much of this is a legacy of the turbulent period during the end of the Suharto regime and its immediate aftermath, when the United States imposed sanctions and other limitations over human rights concerns that TNI officers still regard as a strictly internal matter. Indonesian officials are often only vaguely aware of the fact that such restrictions on cooperation were often shaped by internal U.S. government disputes—with Congress often at odds with the executive branch and with the Pentagon sometimes at odds with the State Department.

Many Indonesian officials see rapidly changing current U.S. regulations as a tangle of obstruction that they are ill-equipped to understand or navigate. Some of this has to do with long-standing and firmly established points of U.S. law, including protection of copyright for technology, end-use monitoring, and rules concerning human rights and bribery. Other areas of concern, however, are related to political actions, which are unfolding at a pace that Indonesians feel unable to comprehend. Several Indonesian uniformed officers expressed confusion at the possible impact of U.S. sanctions on Iran and Russia and of U.S. tariffs on goods made in China. They did not know how these actions would affect their purchasing decisions, nor did they know what other unpredictable factors might be waiting in the near future.

“We are not sure how to interpret the U.S. Patriot Act,” said one Indonesian officer. “If the U.S. suspects that funds are being used for terrorism, then they can be blocked without any

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179 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
180 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
181 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
182 Between 1999 and 2011, the author of this report served as Policy Director for South and Southeast Asia issues on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. From that perch, he had a firsthand view of many internal U.S. government deliberations over security aid for Indonesia. Indonesian observers might be correct in considering such policy formation as being less than universally coherent.
notice. This has not yet happened to Indonesia—but could it?”

Another officer, who specialized in procurement, had a more specific concern: “Will we be sanctioned for buying Russian hardware in dollars?” he asked, referring to prohibitions in the 2017 Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). “Will we be penalized for upgrading our Sukhoi jets? It’s our own money!”

The first officer noted the possible impact of CAATSA and Iran sanctions on USAF cooperation with its TNI-AU counterparts in particular:

Your Air Force wants to cooperate with other nations, but there are too many regulations. We do not have the luxury of possessing high technology, so we need to get it where we can. Your regulation may force us to go to other suppliers, and you cannot control that.

The procurement officer noted that other advanced nations have less-restrictive rules governing their technology:

We’d like to have technology transfer of 85 percent in every contract. Why? So that we can preserve our freedom. Some nations agree to this, others say, ‘No, we’ll only give 40 percent.’ That’s fine, it’s a process. China is flexible on this. Can you be?

Indonesia’s Inward-Looking Orientation, Anti-U.S. Attitudes

Indonesia’s military in general (and its dominant army in particular) remain highly distrustful of all foreign influence—often more so than are civilian policymakers or the general public. This works against Indonesian cooperation with China more than against the United States but is a major roadblock to increased U.S. engagement as well. The attitude, like so much of Indonesia’s modern-day ideology, has its roots in the colonial experience.

The islands that now comprise Indonesia had only loose ties in the precolonial era, and today’s nationalist narrative was forged in the struggle for independence after World War II. In this narrative (not an unreasonable one), Indonesia’s history has been one of constant interference and subjugation by a string of outside forces: the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British during the centuries preceding World War II; the Japanese during the war; the Australians and the Americans during the postwar years, when all of Southeast Asia was decolonized; and

183 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
184 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 16.
185 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
186 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 16.
187 Thailand is the only nation in Southeast Asia that was never under the administration of a European colonial power: It was politically dominated by Japan during World War II but retained its sovereign status. Indonesia declared its independence from Holland in 1945 and added West Papua in 1962. In the postwar period, most of the other nations of the region achieved their independence from Britain (Burma in 1948; Peninsular Malaysia in 1957, with Sarawak and North Borneo added in 1963; Singapore in 1963; Brunei in 1984) and France (Vietnam in 1945, Cambodia and Laos in 1953). The Philippines won its independence from Spain in 1898 but was a U.S. territory
the PRC during the still-murky conspiratorial events of the 1960s. As one Western diplomatic source in Jakarta put it, “Parts of TNI remain ridiculously xenophobic—not just against the Chinese or the Dutch, but against the Americans, the Australians, everybody.”

This attitude is particularly common in TNI-AD, which has a core mission of ensuring internal stability. Under the “proxy war theory” taught at army staff college and other Indonesian military academies, all foreign individuals are seen as potential spies and provocateurs. Such suspicion extends to foreign businessmen, Peace Corps volunteers, tourists, and nongovernmental organization workers. The strategy of national defense described in the 2015 defense white paper is “a defence involving all citizens in accordance with their roles and functions, and other national resources. The involvement of every citizen is based on love for the homeland.

Anti-Western attitudes initially generated by the Dutch (and, in the case of Papua, the Australians) get transferred to the United States. Throughout the early postcolonial period, Indonesia saw the United States backing its European allies Holland (which refused to give West Papua to Indonesia in 1949) and Britain (which rebuffed Indonesia’s attempt in the early 1960s to absorb Sarawak, North Borneo, and possibly even peninsular Malaya and Singapore).

“Sukarno only turned to the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] in the 1950s,” said an Indonesian scholar, referring to Indonesia’s founding president, “after he had been rebuffed by America.”

More recently, additional irritants have fueled specifically anti-U.S. attitudes among TNI leaders. The two that are raised most frequently surround the suspension of U.S. military engagement with Indonesia’s Army Special Forces Command (Kopassus) and the U.S. refusal to provide crew lists for naval vessels docking at Indonesian ports.

Indonesia’s Army Special Forces Command is Komando Pasukan Khusus, better known as Kopassus. As a result of the problematic record of Kopassus during the 1990s, all U.S. funds

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until 1946. Timor-Leste was decolonized by Portugal in 1975 but was immediately invaded by Indonesia, finally winning its independence in 2002.

188 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
189 Interview on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6 (this source attended Indonesian staff college). Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
190 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
191 Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 25: “Pertahanan Indonesia disusun dalam suatu sistem pertahanan semesta untuk mencapai tujuan nasional. Pertahanan yang bersifat semesta pada hakikatnya adalah suatu pertahanan yang melibatkan seluruh warga negara sesuai peran dan fungsiya. Keterlibatan setiap warga negara didasari atas kecintaan kepada tanah airnya”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 27: “Indonesia’s defence is arrange in a total defence system in order to achieve national goals. The system is essentially a defence involving all citizens in accordance with its role and function, and other national resources. The involvement of every citizen is based on love for the homeland.”
192 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
193 From KOmando PASukan khusUS.
were shut off to this command for about a decade. Much of the funding has since started to flow again: Under the terms of the Leahy Act, a remediation process (accelerated in 2010) has permitted funding for certain activities and units. But, as a U.S. official in Jakarta noted, “the sanctioning of Kopassus is brought up to us constantly.”194 Another U.S. official estimated that 60 percent of the eventual leadership of TNI-AD come up through Kopassus and therefore have a personal interest in seeing the command destigmatized.195

A second irritant might be more amenable to change by the U.S. military: provision of lists of sailors on U.S. Navy vessels docking in Indonesian ports. This is a relatively arcane legal dispute but is causing considerable tension. The Indonesian position is that it has a right and an obligation to know who is entering and leaving its territory and that U.S. sailors should not have a special exemption—particularly since sailors from other nations do not receive one, nor do U.S. soldiers, airmen, or marines arriving by air. The U.S. position is that it is U.S. policy and international law to deny crew lists for all U.S. Navy vessels throughout the world and that Indonesia should not be treated differently from other nations.

The complexities of international law on this topic (the United States interprets international law in this case quite differently than other Western nations do) are not relevant for the policy discussion: All U.S. military officials interviewed expressed the desire for some sort of legal work-around, and several described methods that had been applied in other nations. Although a policy shift formally accepting the provision of crew lists would involve branches of government apart from DoD, there may be informal approaches that DoD can take on its own authority (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of possible options).

In addition to irritants such as Kopassus sanctions and crew list denials, anti-American sentiment in TNI often ebbs and flows with the change of commanders’ personalities. During the decade that former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was president (2004–2014), U.S. sources report relatively little anti-American sentiment in top TNI ranks. One official who was stationed in Jakarta from 2009 to 2012 described this period as “a Golden Age” because of the attitude of both SBY and the head of TNI at the time (Admiral Agus Suhartono).196 The current head of TNI, Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto, is also widely described as having a pro-U.S.

194 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
195 Interview on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6. The United States is, however, able to get some benefit of cooperation with Kopassus through its partners. For example, Australia and Great Britain both cooperate with SAT-1 (Unit 81) of Kopassus, which is specifically tasked with counterterrorism missions. As one U.S. observer notes, “the Australians don’t have any Kopassus baggage: They invite them to competitions, and let them win” (interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6). Kopassus also cooperates with the Special Forces of China. They have held at least two iterations of the counterterrorism exercise Sharp Knife, in July 2011 in the Indonesian city of Bandung and a year later in the Chinese city of Jinan. Leighton G. Luke, “China, Indonesia Launch Joint Special Forces Training Initiative,” Future Directions International, June 15, 2011.
196 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
attitude: It is not, perhaps, coincidental that anti-American sentiment is said to run stronger in the army than in the other two branches, given its history and countersubversion internal mission.¹⁹⁷

**Indonesia’s Desire for Balance Among Security Partners**

One manifestation of Indonesia’s policy of nonalignment is its mania for balance among a wide array of security partners. Over the past decade, four nations (Russia, South Korea, the United States, and the Netherlands) have sold roughly the same amount of military hardware to Indonesia, all within a narrow band between $751 million and $880 million. The UK is only slightly lower ($691 million). Three more nations (France, Germany, and China) are clustered tightly around $350 million.¹⁹⁸

This is not a coincidence: Indonesia works hard to keep the widest possible range of partners in approximate balance. When the USAF is denied permission for an engagement, it is often because TNI-AU wants to give that activity to the air force of a different partner.

Indonesia plays mix-and-match among suppliers of hardware to a greater degree than is useful in purely military (rather than broader geopolitical) terms. This creates huge inefficiencies: TNI needs to maintain spare parts and expertise for a large range of noncompatible kit. Moreover, it complicates logistics, makes interoperability between units more difficult, and unnecessarily expands the range of training requirements.

This hodge-podge approach is a telling indicator of the nation’s strong desire to balance its security relationships as evenly as possible—not merely between two geopolitical blocs but even among different nations within these blocs. Indonesia is not just trying to balance the United States against China or Russia, it is also trying to balance the United States against five U.S. treaty-allies. This leads to a bandwidth overload. “We have more than 150 exercises and programs with the U.S. every year,” said an Indonesian Ministry of Defense official. “That’s more than double the 65 or so we have with Australia. On all, we have an exercise or program on average each day out of the year!”¹⁹⁹

Given this desire for balance and nonalignment, U.S. planners should not expect Indonesia to take sides in any competition between the United States and China. “We tend to equate exercises with access,” said one U.S. military official. “If we train together, then we’ll fight together, right? But Indonesia won’t give us basing or overflight rights in any conflict unless China attacks Indonesian territory. Even then, they wouldn’t be thrilled about it.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Hadi’s predecessor, Army General Gatot Nurmantyo (who was removed from office in December 2017), is described by U.S. military officials as having had a far more anti-American outlook. He put protocols in place that hampered cooperation with all of Indonesia’s foreign security partners, but he is said to have been particularly suspicious of U.S. influence. Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1. Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.

¹⁹⁸ SIPRI, undated a.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.

²⁰⁰ Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
put it, “We won’t let any country use our territory as a base. And we won’t be part of any alliance to confront anyone.”

**TNI’s Doctrine and Structure Present Partnership Challenges**

One of the key difficulties in forging a closer partnership with Indonesia is TNI’s lack of a readily implementable comprehensive strategy. Translating the broad idea of nonalignment into specific security policy is a major challenge. The vagueness of the 1945 and 1948 formulations makes them difficult to operationalize, and this is reflected in the vagueness of the 2015 defense white paper (which refers to the 1945 constitution 15 times). The document cites an enormous array of potential threats—many of them outside the military arena and of a type that would normally be handled by civilian branches of government. These threats include terrorism, cybercrime, epidemics, natural disasters, human trafficking, and “national character building” (*pembangunan karakter bangsa*). As both Indonesian and outside analysts have noted, the defense white paper essentially restates positions from an earlier (2008) document, without building on them or providing significant detail about implementation: It is, in many ways, merely a laundry list of concerns rather than a blueprint for addressing them.

According to Ministry of Defense officials, TNI does not train or conduct exercises against any specifically capable adversary. Instead, training and exercises are conducted against a generic foe. This has an obvious impact on the utility of such events: The strategy and techniques necessary to fight against a militarily superior invader (for example, China) are very different from those necessary to repel a limited-scale incursion by a neighbor (for example, Malaysia) or to conduct counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations against a large and

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201 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
202 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. vi, 10, 22, 27 (twice), 28 (three times), 29, 47, 67, 98 (twice), 102, 114; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. iv, 21, 25 (twice), 26 (three times), 27, 44, 60, 91, 92, 96, 99, 107.
203 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 47; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 44.
205 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13. Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
206 For a very informative account of a TNI wargame against such a foe, see Caleb Slayton, “Imagining War with Musang: What a Wargame Explains About Indonesia’s Foreign Policy,” *War on the Rocks*, November 13, 2018. It is noteworthy that even though the enemy is generic (“musang” means “weasel,” but it is used in military circles to refer to a “notional enemy,” according to the article’s author), it sounds a lot like the Philippines: “a hypothetical island nation close to Indonesia that has aligned itself with a rising superpower. Musang . . . has a main island and several smaller ones that extend close to a resource-rich region of Indonesia.”
well-organized internally based adversary (for example, domestic insurgents or terrorist groups, such as the now largely defeated Jemaah Islamiyah).

According to U.S. military officials, TNI’s method of operation presents other institutional impediments to significantly increased partnership. “They call operations ‘joint,’” said one officer, “but they’re really ‘combined’—that is, they do not have meaningful interservice operations.” Moreover, some types of cooperation would be hampered by a lack of security regarding information: “The Indonesian military has no real system of classification,” the same officer noted. “The term rahasia [secret] is used, but it doesn’t mean much. Even sensitive internal discussions often take place on WhatsApp.”

**TNI’s Core Mission Is an Awkward Fit for U.S. Partnership**

Although TNI is tasked with the traditional security mission of defending the nation from external threat, that is only part of its job. The military’s only significant combat experience—and a large part of its institutional identity—has come from internal missions. These are both operational and ideological.

On the operational side, TNI (particularly the army) has been primarily responsible for waging insurgencies. This is often not a mission for which U.S. assistance is useful or possibly even legal: Because of human rights violations in Aceh, East Timor, Papua, and elsewhere, Kopassus (the Indonesian Army Special Forces Command, which has primary responsibility for counterinsurgency operations) was barred from cooperation with the U.S. military in 1999 under the Leahy Act. Since that time, various parts of Kopassus have been “remediated”: The Leahy Act provides specific, transparent means by which units with records of human rights abuses can restore their status as legal partners for U.S. cooperation.

The ban on all cooperation with Kopassus was lifted in 2010, after partial remediation had taken place. When Secretary of Defense James Mattis visited Indonesia in 2018, a restoration of full engagement was one of the primary “asks” of the Indonesian government. Nevertheless, the sanctioning of Kopassus remains a sore spot in U.S.-Indonesia military engagement. Such a view has some popular support but is hardly unchallenged: Indonesia’s failure to punish human

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207 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
208 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
209 This excludes peacekeeping operations (which have sometimes resulted in casualties but are not, by definition, “combat” missions) and semicovert involvement actions against colonial British and newly decolonized Malaysian forces during the 1960s (which were seen by Indonesia as internal efforts at nation-building).
210 McNerney et al., 2017. To some degree, the controversy over Kopassus will eventually take care of itself. Every member of the unit who was serving at the time of the abuses either has already retired or is scheduled to do so by 2021.
211 In the run-up to the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue, Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan agreed to another step in this direction: According to Indonesian Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu, Kopassus and U.S. Special Operations Forces will conduct joint training in 2020, focused on combat medic skills to train soldiers for trauma management and other battlefield skills needed to stabilize wounded troops for medevac.
rights abusers in TNI is controversial, and voices for accountability point to engagement with foreign militaries as encouragement of future crimes.212

Best Avenues for Partnership Include Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Maritime Domain Awareness, and Military Education

**Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

With the insurgency in Aceh over and the one in Papua largely reduced from its peak, TNI is trying to transition to missions more in keeping with Indonesia’s requirements in the 21st century. The most urgent of these is assisting in HA/DR operations in a nation plagued by natural disasters. “They need HA/DR assistance, based not on our preaching, but on their own doctrine,” said one U.S. officer working in security cooperation.213

TNI describes such missions as “Military Operations Other Than War” (Operasi Militer Selain Perang) and is keen to improve its response to them.214 The 2015 defense white paper notes, “The potential impact of natural disasters on people’s lives consist of tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, cyclones, droughts, landslides, volcanic eruptions, and forest fires.”215 A section of the white paper mandates “the involvement and mobilization of TNI in the activities of humanitarian assistance and disaster.”216 Closely tied to this—indeed, directly preceding it in the white paper—is Indonesian participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations. Indonesia has participated in at least eight missions in Africa alone, and the tasks required have often overlapped with those needed for HA/DR duties closer to home.217

This doctrinal instruction has made its way to the uniformed commanders. When an earthquake hit the island of Lombok in August 2018, TNI was instrumental in relief and evacuation efforts (even if there were complaints that its focus was on rescuing tourists before locals to maintain the island’s image as a vacation destination).218 A TNI colonel noted in an interview that “the terrorist threat to our nation comes not only from people, but from nature.” He said that a triservice Special Forces Joint Operations task force was being set up to lead

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213 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 9.

214 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 49; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 45.

215 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 17; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 16.

216 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 99; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 93.


218 Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
HA/DR efforts and was hoping to get the funding necessary for dedicated Chinook helicopters. Every year, Indonesia holds a multilateral military exercise named KOMODO, which is open to all nations that might wish to participate and is usually focused on an HA/DR challenge.

“Natural disasters are our number one threat,” said a uniformed official at the Ministry of Defense, “so disaster relief is our number one priority.” He noted that each part of the country has a different set of threats: tsunamis in some places, earthquakes or volcanoes in others, and often there are unpredictable wild cards. He said that TNI ordered Russian equipment to “water-bomb” the next conflagration after a devasting brush fire but that it had not been available at the right time. “If the government cannot provide adequate aid after a disaster, that’s a national security threat: It fuels terrorism and militancy.” Another officer agreed with the prioritization, adding,

Every year we have a stand-by unit for HA/DR. Mostly it is done by the Army, with KOSTRAD [the strategic reserve] responsible. We always hold an HA/DR exercise. But this is the area where we most need help improving our capabilities.

The U.S. military would be well-placed to provide such assistance, and many U.S. officers noted the benefits both for Indonesia and for the overall relationship. “I’d like to get the operational rate for their C-130s up to 80 percent,” said a U.S. military official working in security cooperation. “Right now, it’s at about 40 percent, which means only four out of ten aircraft are operational at any given time.” A second U.S. military officer noted that KORMAR wanted to step up its involvement with HA/DR (as well as with noncombatant evacuation operations). This involvement might be a way to help TNI build some “jointness,” given KORMAR’s housing in the Indonesian Navy: Currently (the officer said), TNI does not use naval vessels to transport helicopters, and the navy does not have much of its own aviation. But the helicopters need to be transported to disaster sites, and many of these locations are more

219 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 14.
220 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2. A TNI colonel noted that the most recent iteration had 18 participants and 12 observers. Interview on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
221 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
222 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 13.
223 He noted that the United States helped establish an organizing institution (the National Agency for Disaster Countermeasures [Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana], more commonly referred to by the initials BNPB) but acknowledged that TNI could benefit from far more assistance. Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 15.
224 Some also expressed enthusiasm for the impact of HA/DR cooperation on U.S. forces. Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4. Interview with U.S. military official on May 9, 2019, Singapore. Source 19.
225 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 9.
accessible by sea than by land or air. The combination of C-130s carrying large helicopters is “critical” because it enables hub-and-spoke operations.²²⁶

Another U.S. military official noted that the major USAF exercise with Indonesia, COPE WEST, is currently not configured for HA/DR training—but it could be. “COPE WEST is a fighter exercise, but in the past it has been Strategic Lift focused on C-130s.”²²⁷ He suggested bringing air force special forces into the equation: On the U.S. side, personnel from Air Force Special Operations Command could train troops from TNI-AU’s special forces unit Paskhas (from Korps PASukan KHAS) in such HA/DR missions as parachuting into a damaged airfield to clear runways and setting up basic flight operations. He noted that there was precedent for this collaboration because Paskhas had been involved in USAF exercises in the past.²²⁸

According to American observers, the Indonesian military has a lot to learn, and the American military would be well-positioned to assist. Several sources interviewed suggested that refocusing arms purchases on equipment needed for HA/DR (for example, CH-47s instead of AH-64s for rotary-wing aircraft, and C-130s rather than F-16s for fixed wing) might serve Indonesia’s security requirements best.²²⁹ An expert in MDA noted that his specialty could be of enormous benefit to Indonesian HA/DR efforts: “How can you get relief boats into port when you haven’t even mapped your coastlines?” he asked. “And every earthquake and tsunami reshapes the topography, so you’ve got to keep continually remapping it. The time to do all of this is before the next disaster.”²³⁰

Maritime Domain Awareness

MDA is an underappreciated aspect of U.S. military engagement with Indonesia and other nations throughout the Indo-Pacific. In the U.S. military, the mission is housed in the Navy but has significant implications for the USAF (as well as for the Army and Marine Corps). The most authoritative definition of MDA comes from the UN agency responsible for international shipping, the International Maritime Organization: “The effective understanding of any activity associated with the maritime environment that could impact upon the security, safety, economy or environment.”²³¹

²²⁶ Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
²²⁷ Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
²²⁸ Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4. Another officer expressed skepticism about Paskhas involvement, on the grounds that Kopassus would want to maintain dominance as the primary special operations unit in TNI. Interview with Western diplomat on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 11.
²³⁰ Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 3.
As a U.S. official responsible for coordinating MDA efforts with Indonesia noted, MDA involves the precise mapping (and often remapping) of every meter of coastline and territorial waters in the nation's archipelago—a project with clear applicability to Indonesia’s self-described national security goals. The 2015 defense white paper notes, “Indonesia has 92 outermost islets, 12 of which require priority management so the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia can be secured optimally.” MDA also involves tracking every naval vessel that enters—or, ideally, even approaches—Indonesia’s territorial waters. “MDA is central to rule of law and governance—the points that the U.S. makes constantly in competition with China,” the U.S. official said.

Right now, we don’t have a clue what’s actually going on in most parts of the sea. Are there Chinese fishing vessels off the Natunas? Maybe they’re Vietnamese fishermen? Or maybe PLA-N [People’s Liberation Army-Navy]?

Right now, we usually don’t know. As a U.S. military official noted, strengthening Indonesia’s MDA would have clear benefits for U.S. operations in the region: Any U.S. ship or aircraft transiting this archipelago would have access to vital information about its surroundings and any potential threats.

Although MDA is primarily a maritime mission, much of it is carried out by air assets—for example, the Boeing Insitu ScanEagle drone. In June 2019, DoD announced the sale of 34 ScanEagles to four U.S. partners in Southeast Asia: Indonesia will buy eight of the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for $9,197,672. In addition to the Indonesia sale, Malaysia will purchase 12 ScanEagles, the Philippines will buy eight, and Vietnam will buy six. The white paper makes at least 11 references to the strategic imperative of safeguarding its position as the “Global Maritime Fulcrum”—that is, a vital transit point for global trade. As one U.S. official noted, however, “This really should be called the Air And Maritime Fulcrum. Does Indonesia have the capability of policing its entire airspace? Does it even know what is going on throughout it?”

Regarding both traditional MDA and its air counterpart, the U.S. expert noted, “This is one area in which we can offer a range of assistance programs that China cannot. In MDA, there is no competition.”

232 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 9; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, p. 9.
233 Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 3.
234 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
236 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. vi, 2 (twice), 6, 27, 37, 56, 59, 107, 119 (twice), 120 (three times), 122; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, pp. iv, 2 (three times), 6, 25, 35, 51, 54, 63, 101, 113 (three times), 114 (twice), 116.
237 Interview with U.S. government official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 7.
238 Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 3.
Military Education

Another underused avenue of engagement would be military education programs. U.S. officials note that spots in U.S. service academies and training courses are generally oversubscribed, and TNI would be happy to add more slots.

One official suggested following the Australian example by adding longer service school places rather than merely short-duration training billets in order to truly engrain an attitude conducive to future cooperation. He also advocated for more effort to make this engagement a two-way street: “We should put more of our personnel in Indonesian staff colleges. We usually have two. Right now, the number is zero.”239 Another U.S. military official, who attended staff college in Indonesia, noted that this would not be pleasant for U.S. personnel (staff colleges for all three services, he said, resembled a multiyear boot camp) but that it would forge bonds with TNI officers that would serve U.S. interests well in the future.240

This officer pointed out that military education was another area in which the United States has a clear competitive advantage over China. “TNI officers hate to go to staff college in China,” he said. “They can’t bring their families, they’re put in facilities separate from Chinese students, and they feel that they’re treated very rudely over there.” By contrast, he said, Indonesian officers almost universally are eager for opportunities to study in the United States: They find it a very pleasant experience for themselves and their families, and they report learning far more than they do in Chinese courses.241

Best Approach Is Respect and Patience

The importance of respecting host countries and priorities is true of every nation but perhaps in few places as true as it is in Indonesia. Javanese culture (which is the dominant ethos in TNI) privileges courtesy and proper forms of showing respect above many other virtues. “When you want somebody to respect you, you must show respect for them,” said a TNI officer. “You should learn the history of Indonesia. We have a glorious past, many seats of empire. We have the capability of being great in the future.”242

An attitude of respect goes beyond cultural familiarity and even fluency in Bahasa or a willingness to wear batik. The most important element is simply giving Indonesian interlocutors the outcomes that they desire from engagements, rather than the outcomes that the United States might desire in their place. “For American military personnel,” said a U.S. officer, engagements are about concrete outcomes, checking items off a list: What did we learn? What capabilities did we develop? How is the unit better prepared after the

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239 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
240 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
241 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
242 Interview with Indonesian military official on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 14.
exercise than it was before? But that’s not what TNI officers are necessarily looking for.

He noted that TNI commanders, especially at the flag-officer level, expect a degree of ceremony, ritual, and formality that goes against the grain for many Americans. Another U.S. officer said, “They need the pomp, the optics of it all—*that* is the deliverable.”

This officer said that Indonesian interlocutors complained to him about a port visit of a U.S. Navy vessel and compared it unfavorably with a similar visit by a PLA-N vessel. The U.S. ship was more capable and provided TNI-AL sailors with a far superior opportunity to engage with U.S. counterparts on matters of real substance. But the U.S. ship was looking a little cosmetically scruffy, whereas the Chinese craft had just received a new coat of paint. “The Chinese get it,” the U.S. officer said. “Optics really matter. Respect really matters. You can *say* you respect someone, but here you’ve got to *show* it—every day.”

Another officer also highlighted the need to maintain proper appearances and the value of just showing up. “What matters to us?” he asked. “Exercises, readiness, capabilities. What matters to the Indonesians? Office calls, courtesy visits, parades, ceremony.” He noted that the United States keeps missing opportunities:

> They held an international military marathon—a great opportunity to show them some respect just by turning up. Our troops know a thing or two about running. But we didn’t send anybody—wasn’t a priority.

Another U.S. officer noted that when former Secretary of Defense Mattis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford visited Indonesia and hosted Indonesian visitors in Washington, both officials “wowed the socks off” their interlocutors. “They treated them with courtesy and respect,” he said. “The quality of a meeting is more important than the quantity.”

One way of showing respect is by demonstrating patience (i.e., being willing to proceed at a pace comfortable to one’s host). In Indonesia, trying to rush things almost never results in events actually moving faster. Frequently, rushing results in just the opposite. “We could learn a thing or two from the Australians,” said a U.S. official. “When they get a ‘no,’ they just wait it out. Eventually, in their own good time, the Indonesians usually come around.” He noted that displays of impatience are highly un-Javanese and usually are counterproductive. “You might say we’ve got a glass ceiling and a glass floor—we go up or down a bit, but not too much.”

Patience does not, however, imply inaction. It is best used along with an agility to move quickly when openings for engagement suddenly arise. One such case is that of cyber, a specialty that was not even on Indonesia’s radar a short time ago but now most decidedly is. Indonesia is

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243 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
244 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
245 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
246 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
247 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
widely regarded as one of the countries most at risk for civilian or military cyber penetration.\textsuperscript{248} In 2013, the Indonesian Army set up a Cyber Defense Operations Center, and the other services have their own cyber units as well. In 2018, a National Cyber Agency was created to coordinate cyber defense for all agencies of the Indonesian government, military and civilian alike. This presents the USAF and other parts of the U.S. military with an opportunity for engagement that did not exist until recently and that could be filled by another nation (e.g., China or South Korea) if the United States does not enter the space soon.

At the personnel level, another USAF door of opportunity is currently wide open but could start to shut with a transition of TNI leadership scheduled for 2020. The current head of TNI, Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto, is seen as wanting to change the orientation of the military to make it more active and more focused on external threats rather than primarily structured for internal enemies (real or imagined). Moreover, as TNI-AU Air Marshal, Hadi is obviously sympathetic to airpower concerns. TNI chiefs typically serve for periods of less than three years, and Hadi assumed office on December 8, 2017. His rumored replacement is said to be pro-American but not from the air force (the office of Panglima, or head of TNI, typically rotates among the services). The clock is ticking.

Outlook for U.S.-Indonesia Relations Is Good, but Disruption Is Possible

For reasons discussed throughout this report, particularly in this chapter, the outlook for relations between the United States and Indonesia appear to be good within the five-to-ten-year time frame. This outlook is likely to carry over to the realm of U.S. competition with China, so long as U.S. expectations of Indonesia are moderated by the factors discussed above. There are, however, at least two potential scenarios for disruption of relations that merit a very brief mention.

\textit{Internal Disruption Scenario: Domestic Political Instability}

Indonesia’s democratic political system is basically healthy but hardly immune to the possibility of deterioration. Corruption remains a serious problem, and it is never possible to know the precise impact on policy. Political rallies and demonstrations are frequently ginned up, sometimes with the infusion of cash. By some accounts, the Jakarta riots of May 21–22, 2019, were spurred by money. According to the Jakarta police, these riots were linked to a conspiracy to assassinate key officials serving the president, a plot that was foiled at the last minute. The

\textsuperscript{248} A McKinsey report in 2016 urged Indonesia to “double down on cybersecurity,” noting that “the country is subject to one medium to major cyberattack a day.” It stated that “government organizations are not yet aware or resilient enough.” See Kaushik Das, Michael Gryseels, Priyanka Sudhir, and Khoon Tee Tan, \textit{Unlocking Indonesia’s Digital Opportunity}, Jakarta, Indonesia: McKinsey, October 2016, pp. 23–24. Anecdotally, the Jakarta-based author’s U.S. bank account was mysteriously frozen in early 2019. After many calls with tech support, the bank acknowledged that the problem was not with the account but with the country: Indonesia was considered at such great risk for hacking that the bank had blocked all online access from it.
targets identified were former top TNI generals, whose continued influence over their former subordinates still in uniform is regarded as a bulwark preventing the military from taking steps to interfere with the election. Such a plot, if successful, would have undone Indonesia’s democratic progress and conjured up parallels with a similar plot in 1965—a successful assassination attempt that led directly to a quarter-century of military rule.

So long as political battles are confined to the political arena, Indonesia should remain stable. But the prospect for spillage outside the electoral realm cannot be dismissed. One of the social cleavages revealed by the 2019 election was a split between TNI and the Indonesian National Police (Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, or POLRI). Disruptions linked to the 2019 general election, are discussed in Appendix D.

External Disruption Scenario: Forced Alignment Choices or Economic Crisis

Another scenario for potential disruption is a shock caused by external events, whether political or economic. On the political side, either China or the United States could be the triggering agent. If, for example, Beijing brought its South China Sea policy to the Natuna Islands and simply started to build on or occupy one of the more remote outcroppings, Indonesia would be faced with a decision on how to respond. If the United States tried to force that decision rather than follow Indonesian preferences, it might end up spurring a conflict without a clear endgame.

The United States could also create a similar scenario by inadvertently forcing Indonesia to choose sides in a conflict that it considers to be none of its business. That might be a conflict with China (over the South China Sea, the East China Sea, tariffs, or other issues not yet on the table). It might be with Russia (over actions in Syria) or elsewhere in the Middle East, Ukraine, or other parts of Eurasia. It might be with Iran, a nation with which Indonesia maintains friendly relations that it has no desire to sever; when Jokowi visited Tehran in December 2016, he signed 14 agreements of cooperation.249

Indonesia will continue to be displeased by U.S. actions in the Middle East, particularly those seen as harmful to the Palestinian cause (which is popular among Muslim citizens even in the more remote islands of the archipelago). A true rupture, however, would be likely to come not from unpopular U.S. actions but from any U.S. ultimatum that Indonesia abandon its nonaligned status and take sides with the United States. Such a demand is almost certain to be counterproductive.

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What can the United States do to bolster support for the United States in Indonesia, where—despite significant good will among both the public and the military—anti-American sentiment has ticked upward from 2018 to 2020? As one Indonesian analyst said, “If you want to change perceptions, change the reality.”

Options for the United States

The U.S. government should consider the following options with respect to strengthening defense and security cooperation with Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific region.

Accept Indonesia’s deep-seated policy of nonalignment. Indonesia is not going to cast its lot with the United States against China—or, for that matter, against Russia, Iran, or any other potential adversary. Trying to force a choice will only prove counterproductive. U.S. policymakers should instead focus on specific steps that they would like Indonesia to take and make sure that they are within the comfort zone of their interlocutors.

To the greatest extent possible, solicit the views of Indonesian policymakers prior to finalizing decisions that affect Indonesian interests. The Indonesian style of decisionmaking is to talk and talk and eventually arrive at consensus. When one party simply delivers a decision by fiat, that is seen as a slap in the face. The other party is likely to feel as if they are being treated as an inferior rather than an equal. Several U.S. decisions in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years have had an impact on Indonesia, whether directly or indirectly: a trade war with China, U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the threat of military confrontation with North Korea (and subsequent summit diplomacy), CAATSA sanctions on Russia, and trade sanctions on Iran. In each of these cases, Indonesian authorities felt as if they had to learn of the decisions by watching the evening news. It would be very helpful if Indonesian interlocutors could be brought into the discussion, even if sometimes merely in protocol terms, before decisions are finalized and announced.

Deemphasize, at least in discussions, security-heavy elements of the U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific. At the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Indonesia was hoping for a new

250 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
vision of U.S. strategy that relied less on military power and more on economic outreach. “Please do not talk about competition with China!” said one U.S. military official who attended the conference. “They want to hear what we’re doing to prevent conflict—not how we aim to win it.”

Increase engagement on MDA. MDA cuts across many branches of government, both civilian and military. It can only be addressed properly in an all-of-government way, bringing in not only the military (especially the navy and coast guard), but also civilian organizations, ranging from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Getting this cooperation to be seamless is difficult—both within the U.S. government and among different partners, such as Indonesia. But the fact that the United States is a world leader gives it an advantage in helping Indonesia chart, govern, and police one of the world’s most strategically vital stretches of ocean and airspace. “China can’t compete with us on maritime domain awareness,” said one American official. Moreover, improved MDA would enable Indonesia to know exactly when Chinese vessels enter its territorial waters—and to present a démarche to Beijing on any infractions, with evidence. The drastic drop in the price of low-earth orbit satellites (“cube-sats”) and other emerging technologies has made MDA a more attractive proposition than in the past, and one on which Indonesia would welcome engagement.

Reexamine the legal issues surrounding crew lists. As discussed earlier, one of the main irritants to the military relationship between the United States and Indonesia is the conflict over provision of crew lists for U.S. Navy vessels docking at Indonesian ports. This is not an issue that DoD can resolve on its own, since it requires a definitive U.S. government ruling on the legalities involved. These legalities are not at all straightforward: Most nations, including close U.S. allies, take a far less restrictive view of international law on this subject than the United States does.

The U.S. position is that provision of crew lists would be tantamount to searching a vessel and that, under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), warships at sea have sovereign immunity. As one naval officer noted, UNCLOS specifically mentions immunity at sea: It says nothing about vessels in port. Another officer noted that there is no sovereign immunity for air crews who land at Indonesian or other bases and wondered why sailors should be treated differently from airmen. A third officer referenced the War of 1812, one of the causes of which was British vessels stopping U.S. ships and seizing seamen to work in the Royal Navy: “What are we afraid of—impressment by King George?”

The issue should be easier to resolve than other thorny legal tangles: The United States—unlike many nations that freely deliver crew lists—has never actually ratified UNCLOS.

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252 Interview with U.S. military official on May 9, 2019, Singapore. Source 19.
253 Interview with U.S. government official on April 3, 2019, Jakarta. Source 3.
254 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
255 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
Seek opportunities to work with Indonesia to counter Chinese political interference and influence operations, including in the cyber arena. The challenges presented by China to the political systems of the United States and Indonesia are different but overlapping. In Indonesia, China has often used outright bribery, either directly or (in certain cases) through wealthy ethnic Chinese businessmen with commercial interests in both nations. In recent years, there is evidence of increased efforts by the PRC to apply similar techniques to the U.S. political system. In both the United States and Indonesia, China has employed sophisticated cyberinfiltration as a tool for espionage and might do so as a future tool of cyberwarfare. Expanding cooperation could build on a 2018 agreement and include enhanced information-sharing and increased intelligence, cybersecurity, and law enforcement exchanges with other partners in the region and globally. In addition, working more closely with government agencies with relevant intelligence, cybersecurity, and law enforcement agencies in Indonesia can help them counter Chinese espionage and influence operations.

Options for the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Air Force

DoD and the USAF should consider the following options to deepen their relationship with the Indonesian government.

Emphasize HA/DR. HA/DR represents a potentially fruitful area of engagement with the Indonesian military. It is an area that TNI, in its stated doctrine, considers a core mission. It is a mission that directly improves interoperability across all areas of action, does not impinge on Indonesia’s nonaligned status, lends itself readily to multilateral exercises, and improves the capabilities of the U.S. military (particularly the USAF) in operations for which it does not train as often as doctrine might suggest. From the USAF perspective, it would be challenging to integrate an HA/DR element to the primary exercise between the USAF and TNI-AU, COPE WEST, as it is now configured. But the USAF could seek new avenues for HA/DR cooperation to make sure that engagement is relevant to the changing needs of the Indonesian military.

Put more emphasis on respect and patience. Give the Indonesian military officials what they value most: respect, ceremony, and concrete gestures of courtesy. These tend to be treated as mere ritual in U.S. circles and as the prelude for the “real” substance of engagement. But in Indonesia—particularly, in the Javanese culture that dominates military and political circles—subtle displays of respect are the foundation of a stable relationship. The payoff for such displays may not be immediate, suggesting a need for strategic patience. Quite often, Indonesian military officials have their greatest policy impact once they take off their uniforms and enter the political

realm. That is when the treatment they received earlier in their careers will have its effect, for good or ill. Examples of beneficial treatment might include

- office visits, courtesy calls, and other gestures of respect
- high-level visits, both of high-level U.S. officials to Indonesia and by hosting visiting Indonesian civilian and military leaders with a high level of protocol ritual
- official parades or displays when Indonesian officers visit U.S. bases
- any type of ceremony or ritual that serves as a public way to show honor.

*Increase military education programs.* Military education is an area in which the United States has an enormous advantage over China: Indonesian officers eagerly compete for slots at U.S. institutions—all slots offered are typically snapped up—but treat military education in China as a hardship post where they learn almost nothing of value. According to a U.S. official,

> We touch about a thousand TNI officers a year, with a mix of short one-to-two-week courses, our troops coming here to provide training, all the way up to war colleges. Those are the gold nugget.

He noted that, if Indonesia is a priority, we should act like it is: Indonesia received no slots in the Air War College, and the USAF could consider opening some positions up.258

*Encourage Indonesia’s growing cooperation and engagement with U.S. allies (such as Australia, Japan, and the ROK) and emerging partners (such as India and Singapore).* Instead of viewing its allies and partners as rivals for a too-small piece of Indonesia’s engagement pie, the United States should encourage Indonesia to continue expanding and deepening its regional relationships. Steps should be taken to expand awareness of each other’s engagement activities in the region and, where possible and appropriate, coordinate and deconflict their regional outreach and cooperation initiatives, particularly with respect to emerging partners. Doing so would help to ensure they will be able to focus on key objectives and maximize the effectiveness of this growing web of activities.

*Enhance U.S.-Indonesia cooperation in the areas of cyber and electronic warfare.* The growing challenges presented by China’s development of increasingly sophisticated cyber and electronic warfare capabilities will make this an important area for enhanced cooperation between the United States and key allies and partners. The Indonesian Army is now significantly ahead of its air force counterpart in the cyber arena, and this might be a useful area for USAF engagement. Some partners, such as South Korea, might be better positioned than the United States to take the lead in this mission, given Indonesia’s deep-seated suspicion of the intentions of Western nations; if that is the case, the United States should facilitate such cooperation with the ROK.

*Encourage Indonesia to increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, including by participating in multilateral air and maritime activities and conducting operations in the South China Sea.* The United States should encourage the Indonesian Navy and Air Force to consider

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258 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
expanding operations in the region and participating in bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises. U.S. planners should be aware that Indonesia is not eager to conduct U.S.-style FONOPs, which it feels would impinge on its nonaligned status and would leave it exposed to multiple types of Chinese retaliation. Accordingly, the United States is likely to make more progress when it comes to cooperation in other areas of maritime operations.

Work with Indonesia to highlight China’s problematic behavior in the Natuna Sea and elsewhere as needed. Indonesian, U.S., and international journalists can be invited to report from Indonesian and other nations’ patrol aircraft and surface ships conducting operations in the region. Although Indonesia has been reluctant to permit U.S. military personnel to visit the Natuna Islands, it has agreed when such visits suited its purpose. Efforts should continue to persuade Indonesia to present a common front with its ASEAN neighbors that have South China Sea claims, pressing for the peaceful resolution of all territorial disputes in accordance with international law.
Appendix A. Detailed Framework Variable Coding

This report is part of a series of country studies that assess the competition for influence in these nations between China and the United States. The main report, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Study Overview and Conclusions*, presents a detailed explanation of a RAND-developed analytic framework for evaluating which competitor, China or the United States, maintains the most influence in a given third country.\(^{259}\) To offer readers of this report additional details on the framework, Table A.1 briefly explains the color coding of the RAND framework variables. The rest of the appendix presents the sources that supported the framework’s variables.

### Table A.1. Color Coding of Framework Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diplomatic and political ties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue:</td>
<td>Partner has significantly closer diplomatic ties with the United States than China and prioritizes its relationship with the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light blue:</td>
<td>Partner has slightly closer diplomatic ties with the United States than China and places relatively more priority on ties with the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray:</td>
<td>Partner has similar diplomatic ties with the United States and China and attaches similar weight to relations with the United States and China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light red:</td>
<td>Partner has slightly closer diplomatic ties with China than the United States and places relatively more priority on ties with China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red:</td>
<td>Partner has significantly closer diplomatic ties with China than the United States and prioritizes its relationship with China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for U.S. versus Chinese vision for the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue:</td>
<td>Partner views the U.S. vision for the region as highly aligned with its own interests and is concerned that China’s vision undermines its interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light blue:</td>
<td>Partner views the U.S. vision for the region as generally more aligned with its own interests than China’s visions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray:</td>
<td>Partner views both visions as similarly aligned with its interests, or the partner views neither vision as aligned with its interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light red:</td>
<td>Partner views the Chinese vision for the region as generally more aligned with its own interests than the U.S. vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red:</td>
<td>Partner views the Chinese vision for the region as highly aligned with its own interests and is concerned that the U.S. vision undermines its interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of U.S. commitment to the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue:</td>
<td>Partner is very confident that the United States will remain committed to the region and will at least maintain its current level of attention to the region, and partner can rely on the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light blue:</td>
<td>Partner is cautiously optimistic that the United States will remain committed to the region and will likely maintain its current level of attention to the region; and partner can rely on the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray:</td>
<td>Partner is uncertain whether the United States will remain committed to the region, is uncertain that the United States will maintain its current level of attention to the region, and is uncertain that it can rely on the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{259}\) Lin et al., 2020.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light red</td>
<td>Partner is relatively pessimistic that the United States will remain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>committed to the region, believes that the United States will have difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maintaining attention toward the region, and does not believe that it can rely on the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Partner does not believe that the United States is committed to the region,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>believes that the United States is likely to decrease its attention to the region, and does not believe that it can rely on the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Partner public opinion significantly favors the United States over China by more than 20 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light blue</td>
<td>Partner public opinion slightly favors the United States over China by 3 percent to 20 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Partner public opinion has similar favorability views of the United States and China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light red</td>
<td>Partner public opinion slightly favors China over the United States by 3 percent to 20 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Partner public opinion significantly favors China over the United States by more than 20 percent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public opinion**

**Economic**

**Economic dependence**

| Blue                                         | Partner is significantly dependent on trade, investment, and (to a lesser extent) tourism from the United States, compared with China (more than 20 percent). |
| Light blue                                   | Partner is moderately more dependent on trade, investment, and (to a lesser extent) tourism from the United States, compared with China (3 percent to 20 percent). |
| Gray                                         | Partner is similarly dependent on trade, investment, and (to a lesser extent) tourism from the United States, compared with China. |
| Light red                                    | Partner is moderately more dependent on trade, investment, and (to a lesser extent) tourism from China, compared to the United States (3 percent to 20 percent). |
| Red                                          | Partner is significantly dependent on trade, investment, and (to a lesser extent) tourism from China, compared with the United States (more than 20 percent). |

**Economic opportunity**

| Blue                                         | Partner strongly believes that it will depend more on trade and investments with the United States than China in the next 10–15 years. |
| Light blue                                   | Partner believes that it is likely to depend more on trade and investments with the United States than China in the next 10–15 years. |
| Gray                                         | Partner believes that it is likely to depend as much on the United States as on China for trade and investment in the next 10–15 years. |
| Light red                                    | Partner believes that it is likely to depend more on trade and investments with China than the United States in the next 10–15 years. |
| Red                                          | Partner strongly believes that it will depend more on trade and investments with China than the United States in the next 10–15 years. |

**Threat perceptions of the United States versus China (economic)**

<p>| Blue                                         | Partner has significant concerns regarding U.S. economic influence and views U.S. economic strength as threatening, subversive, or coercive. |
| Light blue                                   | Partner has some, but limited, concerns regarding U.S. economic influence and views U.S. economic strength as threatening, subversive, or coercive. |
| Gray                                         | Partner does not view the United States and China as economic threats or has equal concerns about negative U.S. and Chinese economic influence. |
| Light red                                    | Partner has some, but limited, concerns regarding Chinese economic influence and views Chinese economic strength as threatening, subversive, or coercive. |
| Red                                          | Partner has significant concerns regarding Chinese economic influence and views Chinese economic strength as threatening, subversive, or coercive. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Willingness to work with the United States versus China based on        | • **Blue**: Partner seeks to work with the United States to counter or mitigate assessed Chinese economic threats and has taken significant measures to reduce economic dependency on China.  
  economic threat perceptions                                           |  
|                                                                         | • **Light blue**: Partner seeks greater economic cooperation with the United States and has taken some measures to limit or reduce Chinese economic influence in key economic sectors. |
|                                                                         | • **Gray**: Partner seeks greater economic cooperation with the United States and China and seeks economic diversification to avoid overdependence on either country. |
|                                                                         | • **Light red**: Partner seeks greater economic cooperation with China and has taken some measures to limit or reduce U.S. economic influence in key economic sectors. |
|                                                                         | • **Red**: Partner seeks to work with China to counter or balance against assessed U.S. economic threat and has taken significant measures to reduce economic dependency on the United States. |

### Military and security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat perceptions of the United States versus China (military)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blue</strong>: Partner views the United States as a significant military or security threat.</td>
<td><strong>Light blue</strong>: Partner views the United States as a limited military or security threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gray</strong>: Partner does not view the United States and China as military or security threats or has equal concerns about both countries.</td>
<td><strong>Light red</strong>: Partner views China as a limited military or security threat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red</strong>: Partner views China as a significant military or security threat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Willingness to work with the United States versus China based on        |  |
| military threat perceptions                                           |  |
| **Blue**: Partner seeks increased cooperation with the United States to balance against assessed Chinese military or security threat and has taken actions to directly or indirectly balance against China’s military strength. | **Light blue**: Partner seeks increased cooperation with the United States to strengthen its own military capabilities, has taken some measures to address perceived Chinese military threat, and is cautious of directly balancing against China. |
| **Gray**: Partner seeks more military cooperation with the United States and China or partner’s willingness to militarily cooperate with the United States or China is not driven by U.S. or China military threat perceptions. | **Light red**: Partner seeks increased cooperation with China to balance against assessed U.S. military or security threat and has taken actions to directly or indirectly balance against U.S. military strength. |
| **Red**: Partner seeks increased cooperation with China to balance against assessed U.S. military or security threat and has taken actions to directly or indirectly balance against U.S. military strength. |  |

| Support for major U.S.-led security efforts |  |
| **Blue**: Partner has participated or supported many key U.S.-led international and regional security efforts. | **Light blue**: Partner has participated or supported some U.S.-led international and regional security efforts. |
| **Gray**: Partner has shown limited or no support to U.S.-led international and regional security efforts. | **Light red**: Partner has opposed some U.S.-led international and regional security efforts. |
| **Red**: Partner has opposed many U.S.-led international or regional security efforts. |  |

| Military cooperation |  |
| **Blue**: Partner has significantly closer military ties with the United States than China and engages in significantly more military activities and cooperation with the United States. | **Light blue**: Partner has slightly closer military ties with the United States than China and engages in moderately more military activities and cooperation with the United States. |
Variable: Diplomatic and Political Ties

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and analysis.
- **Notes:** We do not use UN voting as an indicator of diplomatic interests. U.S. interests go beyond issues voted on at the UN. Countries vote on a variety of issues in the UN that are not of equal strategic importance to the United States. Among the subset of UN votes that the U.S. Department of State categorizes as important for the United States, a good proportion relates to Israel and Palestine, and the majority of the issues relate to general development or foreign policy concerns that are not specific to security issues in the
Indo-Pacific. In 2017, for example, among the State Department–identified important UN votes, there was only one vote—situation of human rights in Burma—out of 27 votes that was specific to the Indo-Pacific.260

Variable: Support for U.S. Versus Chinese Vision for the Region

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and data from various polling sources.
- **Data source in addition to interviews:** Tang Siew Mun, Moe Thuzar, Hoang Thi Ha, Termsak Chalermpalanupap, Pham Thi Phuong Thao, and Anuthida Saelaow Qian, *The State of Southeast Asia: 2019 Survey Report*, Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019.

Variable: Views of U.S. Commitment to the Region

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and data from various polling sources.

Variable: Public Opinion

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and polling data on whether the country has favorable views of the United States or China. The calculations used U.S. favorability (percentage) minus PRC favorability (percentage).

Variable: Economic Dependence

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on 65 percent trade (the difference in the country’s trade with the United States versus China), 20 percent inward FDI (the difference in the United States versus PRC FDI into the country), 10 percent outward FDI (the difference in the country’s FDI in the United States versus the country’s FDI in China), and 5 percent tourism (the difference in U.S. tourism to the country versus Chinese tourism to the country). Five percent is reflective of the economic importance of tourism to regional countries.\(^{261}\)


- **Notes:** We also examined trade imbalance, including dependency on particular import or export products. As indicated in the main text, we also explored placing more weight on partner exports as compared with imports.

Variable: Economic Opportunity

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and projected U.S. and Chinese economic growth rates.


Variable: Threat Perceptions of the United States Versus China (Economic)

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews, literature review, and polling data.

Variable: Willingness to Work with the United States Versus China Based on Economic Threat Perceptions

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and literature review.

Variable: Threat Perceptions of the United States Versus China (Military)

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews, literature review, and polling data.

Variable: Willingness to Work with the United States Versus China Based on Military Threat Perceptions

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded based on interviews and literature review.

Variable: Support for Major U.S.-Led Security Efforts

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded an aggregate of data collected on how regional countries support or participate in U.S.-led international or regional initiatives: If countries supported major U.S. efforts related to North Korea, including efforts to disrupt North Korean ship-to-ship transfers; participated in South China Sea patrols, operations, or major exercises with the United States in South China Sea international waters; engaged in Taiwan Strait transits; supported U.S. FONOPs; participated in major U.S.-led military operations (Operation Enduring Freedom, International Security Assistance
Force, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Inherent Resolve); and participated in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.


### Variable: Military Cooperation

- **Coding method:** Researchers coded as an aggregate of six measures: if the United States or China has a major military base or facility in the country; relative U.S. versus Chinese arms sales to the country; whether the country has acquisition and cross-servicing agreements with the United States versus a similar agreement with China; whether the country has defense coproduction and codevelopment agreements with the United States, compared with similar agreements with China; whether the country has an information-sharing agreement with the United States, compared with a similar agreement with China; and how much the country militarily trains and exercises with the United States, compared with China.


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262 This source is provided as an example. All of China’s embassy websites that were of interest to this report were used.

Variable: U.S. Versus Chinese Military Capability

- **Coding method**: Researchers coded based on regional interviews and comparisons of current U.S. versus PRC military capability.

Variable: Perception of U.S. Willingness to Aid Partner in Conflict with China

- **Coding method**: Researchers coded based on interviews, literature review, and polling data.
Appendix B. Overview of Indonesia’s Military

Indonesia’s armed forces are referred to collectively as TNI (for Tentara Nasional Indonesia—Indonesian National Military). The individual services are often abbreviated as TNI-AD (Angkatan Darat: “Land Force,” i.e., Army), TNI-AL (Angkatan Laut: “Sea Force,” i.e., Navy), and TNI-AU (Angkatan Udara: Air Force).

According to publicly available figures, the numbers by service are

- Army: 300,400
- Air Force: 30,100
- Navy: 65,000
- total military: 395,500.

Figures for reserves for all branches are not publicly available. Table B.1 summarizes Indonesia’s defense capabilities, comparing figures in 2012 with figures in 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table B.1. Indonesia Defense Capabilities (2012 Versus 2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military spending as percentage of GDP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submarines</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal surface combatants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patrol and coastal combatants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combat-capable aircraft</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alliances and key partnerships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major priorities and threats (including territorial disputes)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TNI-AU flies both Western and Russian aircraft. Its combat fighter and multirole jets include eight squadrons (projected to rise to 11) of F-16s, Su-27s, and Su-30s. Its logistics and transport fixed-wing aircraft include the C-130, CN-235, C-212, and C-295. Its tanker asset is the KC-130B. Rotary-wing assets are operated primarily by the army rather than the air force. Indonesia plans to acquire four airborne early warning and control systems, four airborne refueling tankers,
12 ground-based radar systems, an unspecified number of amphibious aircraft, and an
unspecified number of rotary-wing aircraft for use in counterterrorism operations. It plans to
create two squadrons of UAVs to supplement a small number of Chinese-made UAVs believed
to be based at Pontianak. The United States has been trying to persuade Indonesia to purchase
Predator Bs or Global Hawks, both of which would improve MDA, but no decision had been
made at the time of writing.

TNI-AL operates 209-type diesel-electric attack submarines, older Cakra-class (in TNI-AL
terminology) purchased from Germany and newer Nagapasa-class (also TNI-AL terminology)
purchased from South Korea; older Dutch-built Leander-class and more modern SIGMA-class
frigates; four classes of corvettes; amphibious warfare LPDs (landing platform/dock); and fixed-
wing turboprop CN-235 and PZL M-28 aircraft (the former was jointly produced with Spain, the
latter is a Polish knockoff of the Russian An-28). Most of these craft are outdated (many are
over half a century old) and not nearly numerous or capable enough to defend the 13,000-odd
islands of the Indonesian archipelago from invasion by a determined and capable adversary. In
2010, Indonesia announced a Strategic Defense Plan, envisioning a 274-ship navy, including a
strike force of 110 vessels, a patrol force of 66, and a support force of 98. Indonesia has
contracted to purchase three modern South Korean Type 209-1400 diesel-electric attack
submarines by 2020. The troop strength of the navy includes a 1,000-strong air wing and a
20,000-strong marine corps (KORMAR). TNI-AL and KORMAR both exercise with their U.S.
counterparts, and (according to one U.S. interlocutor) KORMAR has a better relationship with
its U.S. counterpart than any other part of TNI.

TNI-AD is by far the nation’s dominant service. It is configured largely for the mission of
maintaining internal stability, although the precise definition of this remains rather vague. Its
hardware is not necessarily a good match for its goals, however such goals might be defined.
The main battle tanks used are the Leopard 2A4, Leopard 2 RI, AMX-33 and PT-76. TNI-AD
operates both U.S. and Russian helicopters: Apache AH-64s and Russian MI-24s for combat
missions and Bell 412, BO 105, and MI-17s for utility missions. It also operates fixed-wing C-
212s and DHC-5s for logistics and utility tasks.

263 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
264 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4. Interview with U.S. military official on
265 Janes, “Indonesia: Strategic Weapons Systems,” Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment: Southeast Asia, September
266 The number of islands in the Indonesian archipelago is sometimes given as 17,000, but at least 4,000 of these are
uninhabited, often little more than high-tide rocks. Even the figure of 13,500 is somewhat arbitrary, since it includes
many uninhabited or periodically inhabited islands.
267 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
The largest and most important tactical formation of TNI-AD is the Indonesian Army Strategic Reserve Command (Komando Strategis Angkatan Darat, or KOSTRAD). It is a corps-size unit (roughly 40,000 troops), containing battle tanks, artillery (including 155mm M109s and KH179s), air defense units, and RBS 70 missiles. KOSTRAD contains three divisions, one based in Depok (in West Java, just south of the capital Jakarta), one based in Malang (East Java), and one based in Gowa (South Sulawesi). Historically, it has been the commander of KOSTRAD—perhaps even more than the commander of TNI as a whole—who has determined whether a military coup succeeds or fails.

Indonesia’s largest suppliers of military hardware over the past decade were Russia ($880 million), South Korea ($857 million), the United States ($796 million), and Holland ($751 million). China is a not-insignificant supplier ($337 million) but ranks only eighth (after the nations above and France, Germany, and Britain).269

According to the most recent Indonesian defense white paper (published in 2015), all three branches of TNI plan “zero growth and right sizing,” with an emphasis on modernization of equipment rather than expansion of force strength.270

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269 SIPRI, undated a.
270 Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 116 (TNI-AD), 117 (TNI-AL), 118 (TNI-AU); Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 122 (TNI-AD), 123 (TNI-AL), 124 (TNI-AU).
Appendix C. Indonesia’s Security Policymaking

Indonesia is a difficult place to get firm answers, in any aspect of life. A lot of this has to do with the way decisions are made in the culture of Java (Indonesia’s most populous island, home to about 60 percent of its population and what feels like 90 percent of its policymakers). In Javanese culture, a premium is placed on consensus-building. All open shows of disagreement are strongly discouraged—an American-style hashing out of the pros and cons of an issue would, in Javanese terms, look like a crude and impolite argument. As a result, things often simply happen: Decisions are made behind the scenes, with no paper trail of how or why or on whose authority.

“No decision is final until it’s actually implemented,” said one U.S. military official in Jakarta. “You can have a whole series of discussions, and think you’re getting somewhere—and then some guy in a whole different office will stop things up.”²⁷¹ This is not just an Indonesians-versus-outsiders phenomenon: Even within TNI, different branches and offices do not talk to each other. There is no coordination about general officer visits to the United States or other partners, which can result in last-minute cancellations and scheduling tangles.²⁷²

Key decisions are pushed up the chain of command rather than down. The U.S. military takes pride in shifting authority for life-and-death decisions as far down the ranks as it can: the “Iron Majors” at a bureaucratic level and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) during combat. In the Indonesian military, decisions flow in the reverse direction: NCOs do not make important decisions, junior officers defer to mid-grade ones, and every decision of any importance gets pushed up to the flag-officer level.

This structure creates operational problems: When TNI is in the field, officers and troops at all levels are trained not to make decisions on the spot. “NCOs and mid-level officers have no real decisionmaking responsibility,” said a U.S. military officer who works closely with Indonesian troops. “Everything gets pushed up to a higher level.” This concerned the officer as an aviator: “I find it a bit scary to fly in aircraft where air crews defer to officers—the officers lack the expertise necessary to make the right calls on what is or isn’t safe.”²⁷³

This lack of operational-level expertise and deferral of decisions to officers higher up the chain of command results in a lack of capability. Indonesia does not even have the capacity to control the airspace of its most-contested piece of strategic territory: Air control for the Natuna

²⁷¹ Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1.
²⁷² Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
²⁷³ Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10.
Islands airspace is managed by Singapore. Maintenance manuals for complicated military hardware are often years out of date, often because of delays in getting readily available materials translated from English or other supplier languages (which might be understood by a limited number of higher-level officers) to Bahasa (which is the only language likely known to the enlisted personnel responsible for maintaining them).

A U.S. aviator who works in security cooperation noted,

Depot-level maintenance is short-changed, and this carries over to the flight-line: out-of-date tools, expired calibrations for equipment. So they jerry-rig things, they use work-arounds, they fly old craft, in part because they can maintain it at old shops.

It is likely that, if NCOs were permitted more control over maintenance and acquisition decisions, less of this potentially dangerous improvisation would be needed.

This organizational structure results in big decisions taking a long time to get made, purely because of time management. “The junior and mid-rank officers kick it up to the guys with stars on their shoulders,” said a U.S. military source. “And it sits in their in-box forever.” The U.S. Army typically asks for a flag-officer visit 30–40 days in advance, whereas the USAF and U.S. Navy give perhaps twice as long of a lead time. But TNI’s timeframe for evaluating such requests is four to six months. This results in enormous difficulty just getting things through the decisionmaking pipeline.

It also means that the easiest answer to any question is neither “yes” nor “no.” A cultural point that may be relevant: In the national language of Bahasa Indonesia (a language totally separate from Javanese but incorporating a lot of Javanese ways of thinking), one does not say “I have not” done something; the way to say this (saya belum) translates literally as “I have not yet” done it.

**Indonesian Army Is the Deciding Policy Voice but an Imperfect Fit for U.S. Partnership**

The Indonesian Army is by far the dominant service because of its numbers and its ability (and willingness) to intervene in the political process. Whenever the military has openly stepped into the political fray in Indonesia—most importantly, to institute military rule in 1965 and to begin the transition to democracy in 1998—it has been the army rather than one of the other

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274 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1. Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
276 Interview with U.S. military official on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 9.
277 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 4.
278 Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
services that has played the decisive role. This stands to reason: The navy and the air force have assets and missions that are externally focused, while the army’s main missions have been focused on internal stability.

The military as a whole, and the army in particular, have an informally stated dual mission (dwifungsi, in Bahasa): defending the nation from external attack while protecting it from internal political (i.e., not merely violent insurgent) destabilization. Almost all of this political role falls to the army. Its mission is not merely to fight battles but to lead, organize, and supervise the population at large in resisting internal subversion.

A U.S. civilian official, tasked with understanding the outlook of the Indonesian military, explained the basic mindset of TNI-AD: “The Army is focused on conditioning the population to lead a guerrilla war. That’s its main task—creating national unity, leading the people in a ‘universal defense’.”279 The army’s role often takes on a mission set more commonly associated in other nations with a police or internal intelligence service. There is a historical basis for this: Until the post-Suharto reforms (beginning in 1999), POLRI (the national police) was organizationally part of the military, reporting up the chain of command to the Minister of Defense.

“They’re very involved in monitoring the activity of foreign residents and visitors, especially outside of urban areas,” said the U.S. civilian. “They’ve got TNI posted right down to the village level, to keep an eye not only on foreigners, but on anyone they deem a potential subversive.”280 He noted that the target list for such monitoring included not only Western residents (such as Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries, and U.S. Agency for International Development workers) but also Indonesian citizens. “They truly believe that there are Communist or other antistate sleeper cells waiting to be activated.”

This view of TNI-AD’s role and mindset was independently corroborated by two U.S. military officials.281 The idea of universal defense (in Bahasa, petahanan semesla) is firmly embedded in TNI doctrine. One entire chapter (out of nine, excluding the prologue and conclusion) of the 2015 defense white paper is devoted to the concept of bela negara—“defend the nation”—the term for people’s defense obligations.282 The doctrinal chapter titled “Essence of National Defense” is primarily concerned with issues of how to knit together civilian and military responses to security challenges.283

279 Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.
280 Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.
281 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 1. Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.
282 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 101; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 95.
283 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 27; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 25.
Apart from the task of monitoring and leading the populace in a potential guerrilla war, TNI-AD is entrusted with a variety of counterinsurgency missions. Historically, it has deployed most aggressively in Aceh, Papua, and East Timor. All of the combat that TNI has engaged in throughout its institutional history (with the exception of occasional skirmishes during UN peacekeeping operations)\(^{284}\) has been against internal rather than external adversaries. “Indonesia’s Army isn’t structured for external engagement,” said a U.S. military observer. “To the extent that they are organized for fighting, it’s counterinsurgency.”\(^{285}\) As the defense white paper notes, “Separatism is still a security issue which threatens national sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Indonesia.”\(^{286}\)

These factors create obvious problems for increased U.S. partnership: The dominant service (TNI-AD) has an institutional mission and outlook that form an awkward fit for U.S. cooperation. Counterinsurgency operations might be an area of cooperation under other circumstances, but given the track record of the branch of the Indonesian military most directly involved in this mission (Kopassus), such cooperation is at minimum problematic and at maximum in violation of U.S. law. Universal defense (petahanan semesla)—with its police and intelligence skill set of monitoring and directing a civilian population—is a mission outside the bounds of U.S. military engagement and highly unlikely to be welcomed by TNI regardless.

**Indonesia’s Military Budgeting**

Indonesia spends a very small share of its national wealth on defense. The 2015 defense white paper states that “the projected defence budget is expected to be above 1% of GDP [annually], and to gradually increase over the next decade.”\(^{287}\) Even this projection proved optimistic, at least so far: The actual number has been about 0.67 percent of GDP annually for the 2018, 2019, and 2020 budgets; it was only marginally higher (about 0.79 percent) for 2016 and 2017 and is essentially the same level (about 0.7 percent) projected annually for 2021–2023.\(^{288}\)

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\(^{284}\) Indonesia’s peacekeeping unit is called the Garuda Contingent (or KONGA, for the Bahasa KONtingen Gruda). It has deployed on 27 missions since 1956.

\(^{285}\) Interview with U.S. military official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 6.

\(^{286}\) Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 22; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 21.

\(^{287}\) Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 126: “proyeksi anggaran pertahanan diharapkan dapat berada di atas 1% dari PDB dan meningkat secara bertahap dalam kurun waktu sepuluh tahun ke depan”; Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 132: “the projected defence budget is expected to be above 1% of GDP and a gradual increase in the next decade.”

\(^{288}\) By way of comparison, the global average is about 2 percent of GDP, and tiny Singapore spends more than 3.2 percent of its GDP on national defense. Malaysia, which Indonesia has a sometimes-testy relationship with, spends about twice as large a share as Indonesia does of its (admittedly smaller) GDP on defense. In constant 2019 dollars, Indonesia has spent between $6.8 billion and $7.3 billion annually on defense since 2016, and this figure is projected
The official strategy behind these figures is an intent to build a “Minimum Effective Force”—that is, the smallest military necessary to enable Indonesia to achieve its core security goals. As stated in the defense white paper, “Development of military defence posture is directed to fulfill the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) of the Main Components” (the main components are the three services of TNI). The white paper also calls for zero growth in personnel for TNI-AD, TNI-AL, and TNI-AU.

For the five years from 2015 to 2019, TNI’s procurement budget is independently estimated to be $5–6 billion—significantly below the amount requested by the Ministry of Defense. Spending on research and development is increasing rapidly, albeit from a very low starting point: From $225 million in 2015, it is projected to double by 2022 to $450 million. More than half of this funding, however, will likely be devoted to a single program: the plan for joint development with a South Korean firm of an indigenous fighter aircraft.

Indonesia spends far less on military hardware than its territorial size and the size of its military might suggest: For the decade 2008–2018, it spent less than $5.8 billion, compared with $3.3 billion spent by Malaysia (which has 12 percent of Indonesia’s population and a military about one-quarter as large) and $8 billion spent by the city-nation of Singapore.


289 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 41; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 39.

290 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, pp. 122 (TNI-AD), 123 (TNI-AL), 124 (TNI-AU); Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, pp. 116 (TNI-AD), 117 (TNI-AL), 118 (TNI-AU).

291 The firm is Korea Aerospace Industries. It remains unclear exactly what Indonesia hopes to do with an indigenously produced fighter, let alone one taking up half of its research budget. Janes, 2019a.

292 Part of the explanation for Indonesia’s low defense spending is the history of its funding mechanism. Throughout the Suharto years (and even before), TNI had been only partially funded by the national government. Much like officers in pre-20th-century European armies, TNI commanders at all levels were expected to fund the operations of their units by their own means. At the most-benign stratum, military units ran legitimate businesses to earn revenue that was used to pay for troops’ salaries and equipment. At the less-benign strata, such businesses were often little more than mafia rackets, which served largely to enrich the officers while providing the bare minimum necessary to keep the military units nominally functional.

After the fall of the Suharto regime, however, reforms were put in place: In 2004, Indonesia’s legislature mandated that TNI divest itself of businesses above a certain size by 2009. These efforts are still a work in progress. TNI units and officers are still believed to hold valuable real estate and stakes in private firms and to run lucrative “consulting” or private security contracts, often through friends or relatives. This, of course, led to massive corruption—which has been reduced but is far from eliminated. One (rumored) example reported by a U.S official: Indonesian Navy vessels reportedly get authorization for a five-to-seven-day training activity that requires them to sail 200 miles; they will sail 20 miles, remain there, and the commanders will pocket the difference in fuel costs.

An in-depth examination of TNI financing, both during the Suharto era and after it ended, can be found in Lex Rieffel and Jaleswari Pramodhawardani, Out of Business and on Budget: The Challenge of Military Financing in Indonesia, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2007. One U.S. source familiar with the Ministry of Defense suggested that corruption was still a problem but was less endemic in TNI than in civilian political life. Interview on April 4, 2019, Jakarta. Source 10. Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
The degree to which off-budget sources of additional revenue might enhance TNI capabilities—that is, how much of the private revenue goes to supplement the paltry TNI budget and how much is merely skimmed by commanders—is impossible to determine. One useful metric, however, is that the current level of on-budget defense spending is actually lower than that of the early 1990s (0.8 percent of GDP), when the government of Indonesia made no pretense of actually funding TNI entirely through federal expenditures.
Appendix D. Politics, Public Opinion, Other Sources of Influence, and Outlook

Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia

Any discussion of politics in Indonesia must first address the topic of civil-military relations. Indonesia’s military is under civilian control, but this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Between 1965 and 1998, Indonesia was a military dictatorship led by General Suharto (like many Indonesians, he used only one name). Since his fall, retired generals (almost all of them from the army rather than other services) have continued to exert a large degree of power, either as political figures in their own right or as influential actors behind the scenes.

For the decade from 2004 to 2014, Indonesia’s two-term president was the former General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (universally referred to as “SBY”); he remains the head of the Partai Demokrat and an important political figure. The challenger to current President Jokowi, both in 2014 and in 2019, was the Suharto-era Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto—who joined his former rival’s cabinet in October 2019 as Defense Minister. Former TNI commander and former Defense Minister General Wiranto has explored the option of running for president several times and has served as Jokowi’s Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs—a post similar to Home Minister in some nations and, in Indonesia, combining some of the roles of Federal Bureau of Investigation director, National Security Advisor, and Secretary of Homeland Security. The last commander of TNI, Army General Gatot Nurmantyo, who was removed from office in December 2017, was rumored to have been contemplating a political challenge to Jokowi. Perhaps the most influential figure in the current government (apart from the president) is retired Lieutenant General Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, who manages an array of tasks far beyond his official title of Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs.

During times of political instability in Indonesia, the commander of KOSTRAD (the strategic reserve force) has been a pivotal figure. In 1965, Suharto’s command of KOSTRAD enabled him to seize power from founding President Sukarno and to govern virtually unchallenged for over three decades. In 1998, Suharto’s son-in-law Prabowo Subianto attempted a similar action against TNI commander Wiranto (who commanded KOSTRAD the prior year) but failed in his attempt and left the military in disgrace.

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293 One Western source interviewed in Jakarta reported that SBY had very likely bankrolled the 2016–2017 protests against then Governor of Jakarta Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, more commonly known by the nicknames “Ahok” and “BTP.” Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.

294 Suharto fell from power shortly after Prabowo’s attempted coup. Prabowo spent years in self-imposed exile and returned to Indonesia to run for president. He was defeated in both 2014 and 2019 by Jokowi.
Today, democratic practices are more firmly embedded than even in long-established U.S. partners, including Thailand (currently under military rule), Singapore (a one-party oligarchy, albeit a well-run one), and the Philippines (rapidly sliding into autocracy under President Rodrigo Duterte). On April 17, 2019, Indonesia conducted its first all-in-one general election (that is, the president, vice president, and legislatures at both the central and local levels all elected on the same day), and Jokowi earned a second five-year term in office. Despite protests from his rival, the election was deemed free and fair by local and international observers.\(^\text{295}\)

In the 2019 elections, the military and the police were politicized to a troublesome degree: The military leaned toward Prabowo, while POLRI favored Jokowi.\(^\text{296}\) It reportedly took significant behind-the-scenes action by former generals supporting Jokowi to keep the military from participating in any actions that might have discredited the electoral outcome. Prabowo refused to accept the results even after they were officially certified, leading to riots in Jakarta in which seven people were killed and more than 200 were hospitalized. According to the police, riot instigators were plotting to assassinate retired generals supporting President Jokowi, including Wiranto and Luhut. It is noteworthy that exactly such an assassination plot in 1965—i.e., the targeted killing of top military commanders (in that case, actively serving ones)—was the spark of a coup d’état that established three decades of military rule. Moreover, Prabowo’s camp associated very closely with hardline Islamist parties and outside groups, some of which have a track record of inciting communal violence.

Despite its history of political interference and human rights abuses, the Indonesian military is regarded favorably by most citizens. The election and subsequent reelection of former general SBY was regarded by the international community as free and fair.\(^\text{297}\) Although Prabowo lost the 2014 and 2019 elections by about 10 percent each time, he did garner the votes of 69 million citizens in his most recent contest. It is unlikely that TNI will remove itself from politics soon, but it will likely continue the pattern of exerting its influence through retired flag officers.

**Politics, Corruption, and Impact on Security Policy**

When Transparency International released its first ranking of global corruption, Indonesia ranked last: the most corrupt nation on the planet. This was toward the tail end of the dictatorship of Suharto, who was ranked by *Forbes* as the world’s most corrupt autocrat. He is estimated to have looted up to $35 billion, and not a dime of that money was ever repaid. This example


\(^{296}\) Interview with U.S. government official on April 2, 2019, Jakarta. Source 5.

\(^{297}\) In 2004 and 2009, Indonesia did not have a system for direct presidential election. SBY’s party won a plurality in the legislature, but both elections were seen, quite correctly, as mandates for SBY himself.
permeated every level of society, from ministers doling out infrastructure projects for kickbacks, down to traffic cops fleecing drivers at traffic lights.\textsuperscript{298}

This deeply ingrained corruption affected every aspect of government funding, not least of which included the funding of the military. As noted above, throughout the Suharto years, TNI commanders at all levels were expected to fund many of their units’ operating expenses through off-the-books operations—some legal, many not. For any security partner of Indonesia, the move to clean up a deeply corrupt culture makes engagement far easier than in the past.

Since Suharto’s fall in 1998, Indonesia has steadily clawed its way up the corruption rankings. Last year, for the first time ever, it made it (just barely) into the top half of the scale: 89th out of 190 nations.\textsuperscript{299} Much of the credit goes to the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, or the Indonesian corruption eradication commission: a special organ of government set up to investigate, prosecute, and imprison corrupt politicians and judges. Ultimately, however, the success of an effort at good governance is only as strong or weak as the political will behind it.

Indonesia’s democracy—at least for now—is a story of success. Since the fall of Suharto, Indonesia has chosen a leader six times (in two cases, reelecting an incumbent). The first five were indirect elections in a quasi-parliamentary system; in 2019, the president was directly elected for the first time. Corruption remains a problem in Indonesian politics: Ministers are paid off, attendees at political rallies are hired on a daily rate, and deals are made for lucrative projects or briefcases of cash. But the voting and the tabulation of the votes—the actual nuts and bolts of the electoral process—have generally been regarded by domestic and international observers as free and fair. Indonesia, a firmly entrenched military dictatorship barely 20 years ago, is now the most democratic nation in all of Southeast Asia.

**Public Opinion**

The standing of the United States in Indonesia has dropped considerably in recent years—rather more than polls indicate, to go by the interviews conducted with U.S., other Western, and Indonesian sources alike. This is true at the popular level and at the level of policy formation.

At the popular level, there is one factor specific to Indonesia and one observed in most countries throughout the region (and further afield). The Indonesia-specific factor is the end of the presidency of Barack Obama: For the first time in history, a U.S. president had spent several of his formative childhood years in Indonesia, had Indonesian blood relatives and an Indonesian stepfather, and was even able to converse with Indonesian interlocutors in rusty (but intelligible) Bahasa Indonesia. The “soft-power” impact of this can hardly be overestimated. Pictures of Obama could be seen in remote villages throughout the archipelago, and Jokowi’s slight physical resemblance to the U.S. president was sometimes cited as a factor that helped his election. The

\textsuperscript{298} Blank, 2019b.

\textsuperscript{299} Transparency International, 2018.
Obama presidency might have raised the public image of the United States to artificial and unsustainable heights, so a drop in poll numbers (and an even larger drop in anecdotal public perception) could represent a reversion to the norm.

The second factor in falling support for the United States in Indonesia is a series of actions by the Trump administration that have been highly unpopular among the Indonesian population. These include the ban on immigrants and visitors from several Muslim nations; inflammatory rhetoric about Islam, Muslims, and citizens of “[expletive]-hole countries”; an approach toward Middle East peace that is perceived as being hostile to the interests of Palestinians; stepped-up military action against Muslim nations, including Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen; and a general perception that Indonesians would not be welcome in the United States.300 “All of this goes down very poorly here,” said one Indonesian analyst. “Over the past two years, there’s been so much hateful stigmatization.”301 Such perceptions mirror those found in Muslim-majority nations and non-Muslim nations in Asia and elsewhere around the world.

At the policymaking level, the years from 2017 onward have seen a drop in confidence of U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific region and a frustration with the apparent lack of a coherent, stable, well-articulated strategy for engagement in Asia. The back-and-forth nature of much U.S. policymaking leaves many Indonesian observers confused. The decision to enter negotiations with North Korea was more popular in Indonesia than in other parts of Asia: Indonesia does not feel threatened by North Korea and even offered its services as an intermediary.302 But the wild fluctuations of position were simply baffling to many.

More important, the apparent abandonment of Indonesia’s two closest Asian partners (South Korea and Japan) left policymakers wondering whether U.S. promises of security protection (or even consideration of Indonesia’s security interests) could be trusted. At the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Indonesian observers (like those from other nations in the region) were left with the impression that the U.S. administration simply did not understand their concerns. As one U.S. military official interviewed during the conference put it, “We have to start listening to our partners. They do not want reassurance that we’ll protect them if we go to war with China—they want reassurance that we won’t go to war with China in the first place.”303

The lack of U.S. economic competition is of real concern to Indonesians. “We need infrastructure investment—roads, ports, railway,” said an Indonesian analyst. “China provides this, and so does Japan. But the U.S. is mainly interested in oil and gas.”304 The 2015 defense white paper noted three elements of the U.S. rebalance to Asia: the military, the Regional

300 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
301 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
302 Interview with U.S. military official on April 1, 2019, Jakarta. Source 2.
304 Interview with Indonesian security analyst on April 5, 2019, Jakarta. Source 12.
Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the TPP. The RCEP is a red herring: The United States was never slated to be party to this proposed agreement, and it has not yet come into effect. Its mention in the white paper does, however, highlight Indonesia’s view that economic engagement (in the RCEP, including by U.S. allies, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea) is a core element of national security. The mention of the TPP, however, is more important.

The U.S. decision to withdraw from the TPP on January 23, 2017, was seen as a serious setback for American commitment to the region. Even though Indonesia was not party to the TPP, many in policymaking circles hoped that it would join once certain domestic objections were overcome. Moreover, there was optimism that the TPP might be linked to the RCEP to form a larger pact, which Indonesia would be a part of. Planners also hoped that there would be follow-on effects from the TPP presence of neighboring Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. More importantly, the TPP was seen as a U.S. attempt to counter China’s economic dominance in the region. By bringing many parties together, the United States was assembling exactly the sort of multinational coalition that lies within Indonesia’s comfort zone: This was not seen as an alliance but as a multilateral effort to provide a counterweight to China’s BRI. Without anything to replace the TPP, Indonesian planners are left with Chinese investment as their primary source of infrastructure funding and trade development.

If there is any consolation for U.S. planners in popular polling data (see Table D.1), it is that the U.S. drop in popularity has been matched or exceeded by that of China. Given China’s economic dominance and other sources of influence discussed above, this is not necessarily much compensation. But it is worth recognizing that America’s loss is not always China’s gain. The key difference is that China does not achieve its regional goals by being popular: It relies on economic investment, at levels the United States is unlikely ever to match, combined with aggressive military tactics and the raw facts of geography and demography (it is a nation of 1.4 billion, located right in the heart of the region rather than on its periphery).

305 Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015, p. 7; Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015, p. 7.
306 The RCEP is a proposed trade agreement among the ten nations of ASEAN and other Indo-Pacific nations, including China and India. It is still under negotiation. In March 2019, negotiators met in Siem Reap, Cambodia, to try to accelerate the pace of talks with a goal of concluding by the end of the year. Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, “The 7th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Intersessional Ministerial Meeting,” press release, Siem Reap, Cambodia, March 2, 2019.
Table D.1. Public Opinion in Indonesia

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<tr>
<td>U.S.²</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>China³</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
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|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| U.S.²  | 54%                    | 40%                      |
| China³ | 67%                    | 28%                      |

Other Sources of Chinese Influence: Tourism and Soft Power

The primary source of Chinese influence—direct inducement through financial incentives to military and civilian policymakers—is discussed earlier. China’s share of tourists to Indonesia (11.5 percent of total tourists in 2014) is more than quadruple that of the United States (2.6 percent), but it is barely half the percentage of the combined share of the United States and its allies Japan and Australia. China’s student population in Indonesia is quite modest, particularly for its size: a mere 3.3 percent of all nations, according to 2016 data.³⁰⁷

Indonesia’s 2019 Elections and Implications

This author observed voting at a polling station in Yogyakarta, and the process (at least here, at a polling site selected basically at random, with no notice to any official) was transparent, fair, straightforward, and tamper-proof.³⁰⁸ No intimidation was in evidence: All electioneering (even the wearing of political T-shirts) was banned, throughout the nation, for days preceding the vote. Each voter verified his or her identity with the volunteers running the operation. Some had government-issued ID cards, others were able to get such identification without charge, on the spot.

Every voter was then given five huge color-coded ballots: A gray one for president, and green, red, blue, and yellow ones for candidates running for the national assembly and various

³⁰⁸ For a discussion of the voting and the election in general, see Blank, 2019a.
subnational legislatures. Each ballot contained a list of candidates with a photo and the symbol of the party clearly marked. There was no likelihood of confusion (i.e., no “butterfly ballots,” no uncertainty about which candidate was running on which ticket) and no difficulties for voters in a country where nearly a third of voters above the age of 65 cannot read. Each voter marked his or her ballots, then put them in the appropriate box: red in the red box, green in the green box, and so on. Afterward, he or she dipped a finger in ink to prevent duplicate voting and to receive a discount at participating stores and shopping malls throughout the city.

Once all the votes had been cast, the election supervisors opened the boxes and read each ballot out in turn—first the votes for president, then national assembly, and so on. In each case, two officials examined the ballot before announcing the result by loudspeaker. Poll watchers from the campaigns, and any citizens who wished to do so, could cluster around and observe the tabulation for themselves (and half a dozen poll watchers did so). Once the votes were tallied, the results were announced to the people, and the waiting campaign workers phoned the results in to their headquarters. If any alterations were made between the polling site and the citywide tabulation centers, there would be dozens of records—including smartphone photos of the posted vote counts—to disprove any false reporting.

Once the tabulation was done, the paper ballots were taken away under armed police escort (there had been unarmed guards present throughout, and an armed policeman was present for certain parts of the process). If subsequent verification of any particular voting station’s records was needed, the paper ballots would have been on hand.

The process was uniform throughout the nation, not a mishmash of local procedures and techniques. Prabowo’s supporters have challenged the outcome, but this challenge appears to be based on raw politics rather than any well-founded technical complaint.

From the standpoint of U.S.-China competition, the 2019 election has several important takeaways:

- **The reelection of Jokowi prevented what could have been a sudden turn away from trend lines favorable to U.S. interests.** Some observers saw Prabowo, a former general who completed the Advanced Infantry Course at Fort Benning in 1985, as a natural advocate for U.S. security cooperation. Such an interpretation is likely inaccurate. Prabowo’s campaign had a strongly antiforeign, isolationist strain to it. Whatever Prabowo’s personal views may be, he allied himself politically with conservative Islamist parties, such as the Prosperous Justice Party, and violent hardline groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front. His entry to the Jokowi cabinet as Defense Minister, moreover, creates a de facto government of national unity that provides a unified structure of policymaking.

- **The direct election of Jokowi—rather than the indirect parliamentary election of past presidents—will give him a personal mandate to take risks in the security arena.** The U.S. complaints about Indonesia’s security engagement typically are not that the country is doing the wrong things, merely that it is not doing enough of the right things fast enough. A politically empowered president with a track record of generally pro-American engagement is likely to take steps beneficial to U.S. interests.
• Depictions of Jokowi as favoring China are overblown and are likely to recede in the postelection period. In the run-up to polls, one of Prabowo’s avenues of attack on his rival was that he was too close to China. This appeared to be a dog-whistle aimed at stirring up nativist sentiment against ethnic Chinese (including Jokowi’s protégé and successor as governor of Jakarta, the ethnic Chinese politician BTP. Jokowi’s decision to hold a cabinet meeting on a TNI-AL warship off the coast of Natuna Besar island in June 2016 sent a strong message to the PRC. In the wake of this event, Chinese incursions around Natuna dropped noticeably.\textsuperscript{309}


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The U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD’s) 2018 National Defense Strategy highlights the importance of working with regional allies and partners in order to manage China’s rise as a strategic competitor to the United States in the Indo-Pacific region. In this country-level report in a series, the author examines the potential for, and potential impediments to, partnering more closely with Indonesia.

In many ways, Indonesia is a natural partner: Its self-defined core national security interests, including the preservation of its sovereignty against encroachment by any would-be hegemonic regional power, are in relatively close harmony with those of the United States. But U.S. planners must be keenly aware of the constraints on Indonesia’s willingness and capacity to forge a partnership based on strategic competition with China. These constraints include persistent aversion to any partnership that might be characterized as “alignment”; enduring antiforeign attitudes, particularly in military circles; strong desire to balance security engagement among the widest possible array of nations; deep and growing economic linkages with China; an institutional mindset for the military that is geared more toward internal stability than external defense; historical and ongoing underfunding of basic military needs; and a lack of military capability and interoperability sufficient for frictionless interaction with U.S. forces. Although Indonesia will remain an important U.S. partner, such challenges should moderate expectations about the pace for increased engagement.