

# China-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation from the Perspective of Constructivism

## Kerjasama Maritim China-Indonesia dari Perspektif Konstruktivisme

Yang Yani<sup>1</sup>, Yon Machmudi<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Syaroni Rofii<sup>3</sup>

Sekolah Kajian Strategik dan Global Universitas Indonesia  
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Indonesia

Email: [yaniyang@gmail.com](mailto:yaniyang@gmail.com), [machmudi@ui.ac.id](mailto:machmudi@ui.ac.id),  
[muhammadsyaroni@ui.ac.id](mailto:muhammadsyaroni@ui.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** *China and Indonesia, as two pivotal nations in Asia, have established a cooperative and mutually beneficial social relationship through their long-term interactions. This relationship transcends the extensive maritime domains and abundant marine resources of both countries, being deeply influenced by their shared norms and collective identities. For instance, China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiative and Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum strategy not only exemplify this social relationship but also mirror the mutual understanding and aspirations of both nations regarding maritime cooperation. Specifically, notable advancements have been achieved in areas such as trade, investment, infrastructure development, fisheries, energy, and marine tourism. Concrete examples of these positive outcomes include the collaborative Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Rail project and the development of the "Twin Parks" fisheries center between China and Indonesia. However, despite the positive strides in economic cooperation, progress in maritime security collaboration has been comparatively slow. Challenges such as the South China Sea disputes, illegal fishing, Indonesia's policy of balancing major powers, and the rise of domestic nationalism present potential hurdles to cooperation. To further deepen their partnership, both countries need to continually adjust and reshape their norms and identities through interaction, enhance political trust, and strengthen cultural exchanges. Moreover, actively exploring possibilities in non-traditional security cooperation, such as joint efforts*



*in marine environmental protection and combating maritime crime, could pave new pathways for the development of their bilateral relations.*

**Keywords:** *China, Indonesia, Maritime Cooperation, non-traditional security*

**Abstrak:** *China dan Indonesia, sebagai dua negara kunci di Asia, telah membentuk hubungan sosial yang kerjasama dan saling menguntungkan melalui interaksi jangka panjang mereka. Hubungan ini melampaui wilayah maritim yang luas dan sumber daya laut yang melimpah di kedua negara, dipengaruhi secara mendalam oleh norma bersama dan identitas kolektif mereka. Sebagai contoh, inisiatif Jalur Sutra Maritim Abad ke-21 dari China dan strategi Global Maritime Fulcrum dari Indonesia tidak hanya mencerminkan hubungan sosial ini tetapi juga mencerminkan pemahaman dan aspirasi bersama kedua negara terkait kerjasama maritim. Secara khusus, kemajuan signifikan telah dicapai dalam bidang perdagangan, investasi, pengembangan infrastruktur, perikanan, energi, dan pariwisata laut. Contoh konkret dari hasil positif ini termasuk proyek Kereta Cepat Jakarta-Bandung yang kolaboratif dan pembangunan pusat perikanan "Twin Parks" antara China dan Indonesia. Namun, meskipun langkah positif dalam kerjasama ekonomi, kemajuan dalam kolaborasi keamanan maritim berjalan relatif lambat. Tantangan seperti sengketa Laut China Selatan, penangkapan ikan ilegal, kebijakan Indonesia dalam menjaga keseimbangan kekuatan besar, dan munculnya nasionalisme domestik menjadi hambatan potensial untuk kerjasama. Untuk lebih memperdalam kemitraan mereka, kedua negara perlu terus menyesuaikan dan membentuk kembali norma dan identitas mereka melalui interaksi, meningkatkan kepercayaan politik, dan memperkuat pertukaran budaya. Selain itu, eksplorasi aktif terhadap kemungkinan kerjasama keamanan non-tradisional, seperti upaya bersama dalam perlindungan lingkungan laut dan penanggulangan kejahatan maritim, dapat membuka jalan baru untuk pengembangan hubungan bilateral mereka.*

**Kata kunci:** *China, Indonesia, Kerjasama Maritim, keamanan non-tradisional*

## **Background**

With the further development of economic globalization and regional economic integration, the ocean has become an important channel connecting countries, which is of great significance for safeguarding national economic security and geopolitical interests. The market, technology, information and other cooperation with the sea as the carrier and link are also increasingly close. The development of the blue economy has gradually become an international consensus. An era of more attention and reliance on maritime cooperation and development has arrived. Strengthening maritime cooperation conforms to the trend of

world development and the trend of open cooperation. It is an inevitable choice to promote closer economic ties, deeper mutually beneficial cooperation, and broader development space for all countries in the world. It is also an important way for all countries in the world to jointly respond to crisis challenges and promote regional peace and stability.

In this context, China Indonesia maritime cooperation is particularly important. As two important countries in Asia, China and Indonesia both have vast marine fields and rich marine resources. China's coastline is 32000 kilometers long, and the sea area under its jurisdiction is 3 million square kilometers. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world, with rich marine resources and huge development potential. At the same time, it is in charge of the Malacca Strait. There are three busy international routes passing through its territorial waters. Indonesia's maritime security also directly affects global trade and the flow of strategic goods. Therefore, the cooperation between China and Indonesia in the maritime field can not only promote their respective economic development, but also help maintain regional maritime security and stability.

Since the establishment of the strategic partnership between China and Indonesia in 2005, bilateral relations have developed rapidly. In October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Indonesia, and the leaders of the two countries announced that the bilateral relationship had been upgraded from a strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership, promoting cooperation in all fields in an all-round way, and carrying out exchanges and cooperation at a higher level, in a wider range and on a larger stage. At the same time, Chinese President Xi proposed to jointly build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road with ASEAN countries. Joko Widodo, Indonesia's new president, took the "global marine fulcrum" as his country's future development strategy when he took office in October 2014. The maritime development strategies of the two countries are highly compatible. China and Indonesia are strategic opportunities for each other, especially maritime cooperation has become a key cooperation area of the two countries in the new century.

However, China-Indonesia maritime cooperation also faces some challenges. Disputes in the South China Sea, illegal fishing and nationalism in Indonesia have affected the maritime cooperation between the two countries. How to continue to deepen and expand maritime cooperation while facing these challenges is an important issue in Sino-Indonesian relations.

The South China Sea dispute is a complex geopolitical issue, involving the territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests of many countries. China's ideas and actions in the South China Sea, though based on its understanding of history and international law, have aroused the concern and worry of Indonesian and other countries. Illegal fishing is an important marine environment and resource problem. The rich fishery resources in Indonesian waters have attracted a large number of foreign fishing boats, including some from China. However, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing has caused serious damage to Indonesia's marine resources and fishery economy. This has not only triggered conflicts and frictions between China and Indonesia, but also challenged the cooperation between the two countries in the fields of marine environmental protection and sustainable development.

Therefore, how to continue to deepen and expand maritime cooperation while facing challenges such as disputes in the South China Sea and illegal fishing is an important issue in Sino-Indonesian relations. This requires the two countries to innovate and adjust their policies in order to adapt to the complex and changing marine environment and relations.

This paper will discuss the maritime cooperation between China and Indonesia and the challenges it faces from the perspective of constructivism. Constructivism theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction, norms and identity in international relations, and holds that national behavior is not only based on material interests, but is influenced by cognition, norms and identity constructed in its social environment and interaction (Wendt, 1992) <sup>1</sup>.

First of all, this paper will analyze the general situation of China-Indonesia cooperation in the marine field. In this part, the author will discuss how the two countries have constructed a cooperative relationship based on common interests and norms through long-term interaction and communication, and how this cooperative relationship reflects the social identity and interaction of both sides.

Then, the author will discuss the main challenges affecting China-Indonesia maritime cooperation. From the perspective of constructivism, these challenges are not only the conflict of material interests, but also the result of the interaction and construction of norms and identities between the two sides.

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.

Then, this paper will put forward some possible suggestions and strategies on how to deal with these challenges. These suggestions and strategies will be based on the theoretical framework of constructivism, emphasizing the reconstruction of the norms and identity of cooperation through interaction and dialogue, so as to promote cooperation between the two sides.

Through this study, we can have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of China Indonesia maritime cooperation and its challenges from the perspective of constructivism, and provide useful theoretical guidance for bilateral cooperation.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a multi-faceted approach to explore the dynamics of maritime cooperation between China and Indonesia. The methodology is structured as follows:

**Literature Review:** An extensive review of existing literature forms the foundation of this study. This includes academic journals, government reports, and publications from international organizations related to maritime cooperation, regional geopolitics, and constructivist theory in international relations. The literature review aims to identify gaps in current research and establish a theoretical framework for analyzing China-Indonesia maritime relations.

**Case Study Analysis:** The research utilizes a case study approach, focusing on specific instances of maritime cooperation and challenges between China and Indonesia. This includes projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, joint maritime exercises, and instances of conflict or cooperation in the South China Sea. Each case study is analyzed to understand the complexities of the bilateral relationship and the impact of external and internal factors.

**Constructivist Theoretical Framework:** The study is grounded in a constructivist theoretical perspective, which emphasizes the role of social constructs, norms, and identities in shaping international relations. This framework is used to analyze how China and Indonesia's maritime cooperation is influenced by their respective national identities, regional aspirations, and the evolving international order.

**Qualitative Data Analysis:** Data collected from the literature review and case studies are analyzed qualitatively. This involves thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and narratives that emerge from

the data, providing insights into the nature of maritime cooperation and its challenges.

**Policy Analysis:** The study also includes an analysis of relevant policies and agreements between China and Indonesia, examining how these documents reflect and shape the maritime cooperation framework between the two nations.

By integrating these methodologies, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving maritime cooperation between China and Indonesia, the challenges they face, and the implications for regional stability and international relations.

## **Overview of China Indonesia maritime cooperation**

### **Overview of marine economic cooperation**

The maritime economic cooperation between China and Indonesia has become a key area of bilateral maritime cooperation, which has made remarkable achievements in many aspects, such as trade, investment, infrastructure construction, fisheries, energy and marine tourism. In terms of fishery cooperation fields. The Memorandum of Understanding on Fisheries Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia signed in 2001 represents the beginning of China Indonesia fisheries cooperation. On the basis of equality and mutual benefit, the two sides carry out development activities in the fishery field, joint training and inspection, and promote the establishment of aquatic product processing and marketing enterprises<sup>2</sup>. On November 10, 2007, the State Oceanic Administration of China and the Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries of Indonesia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Marine Field between the State Oceanic Administration of China and the Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries<sup>3</sup>. of Indonesia. In 2013,

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Memorandum of Understanding on Fisheries Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Ocean Affairs and Fisheries of the Republic of Indonesia" (Memorandum on fisheries cooperation between China and Indonesia). April 23, 2001. [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/tytj\\_674911/tyfg\\_674913/200203/t20020326\\_7949484.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/tytj_674911/tyfg_674913/200203/t20020326_7949484.shtml). Diakses pada 2023/08/10.

<sup>3</sup> Embassy of China in Indonesia. "中国与印尼签署《中印尼海洋领域合作谅解备忘录》" (China and Indonesia sign memorandum of understanding on maritime cooperation). November 12, 2007. [http://id.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/zgyyn/zywx/200711/t20071112\\_2343791.htm](http://id.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/zgyyn/zywx/200711/t20071112_2343791.htm).



the two sides formed and published the Future Plan of China Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In the plan, the two heads of state spoke highly of the positive progress made in maritime cooperation between the two countries, fully recognized the important role played by the Maritime Cooperation Committee, and agreed to promote the full implementation of the projects that the two sides have agreed on and are supported by the China Indonesia Maritime Cooperation Fund as soon as possible. The two heads of state also encouraged the two sides to further strengthen practical cooperation in the fields of navigation safety, maritime safety, naval cooperation, marine scientific research and environmental protection, maritime search and rescue, fisheries, blue economy, and accelerate the construction of projects such as the development of China Indonesia Ocean and Climate Center<sup>4</sup>. On November 16, 2022, President of China went to Bali, Indonesia, to attend the 17th G20 Summit. During this time, the joint statement of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia mentioned that the two sides will deepen fishery cooperation, carry out Indonesia's "national fish warehouse" and other projects, and create new highlights of maritime cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of the signing of relevant treaties, China Indonesia cooperation in fishing, aquatic technology exchange, marine living resources development and conservation, and aquatic products trade has been constantly strengthened. Indonesia, as an archipelagic country, has rich fishery resources, and China has abundant funds and advanced technology. On June 5, 2021, in Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China, Indonesia's Minister of Ocean Affairs and Investment Coordination Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan met with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and agreed to establish a national fishing port in Ambon.<sup>6</sup> Indonesia's fishery export volume continued to grow. From January to July 2022, it was 3.57 billion, an increase of 18.16% compared with the same period in 2021. At present, the three main export destinations of Indonesian fishery are the United States, China and ASEAN countries. Indonesia's export of aquatic

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<sup>4</sup> Sun Yueqi. "New challenges and countermeasures for China-Indonesia fishery cooperation." *Academic Review* (2018): 69-78.

<sup>5</sup> Government of the People's Republic of China. "[中华人民共和国和印度尼西亚共和国联合声明]." November 17, 2022. [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-11/17/content\\_5727371.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-11/17/content_5727371.htm).

<sup>6</sup> BenarNews. "[Cina-Indonesia Sepakati Pembangunan Pelabuhan Ikan Nasional]." July 6, 2021. <https://www.benarnews.org/indonesian/berita/cina-indonesia-maritim-06072021135803.html>.

products to China has still increased under the epidemic, amounting to US \$485.33 million, an increase of 26.75% compared with last year.<sup>7</sup>

Fujian Province, as the core region of China's "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" initiative, is accelerating in-depth economic cooperation with Indonesia, especially in the field of fisheries. An important milestone of this cooperation is the Memorandum of Cooperation between China and Indonesia on the "Two Countries, Two Parks" Project signed in 2021, which is jointly signed by the Ministry of Commerce of China, the People's Government of Fujian Province and the Ministry of Marine and Investment Planning of Indonesia. Under this framework, China has chosen Fuzhou Fuqing Yuanhong Investment Zone as the Chinese park, while Indonesia has identified Mindan Industrial Park, Avina Industrial Park and Batang Industrial Park as cooperation parks. Substantive progress has been made in this cooperation. At present, 36 projects in Chinese parks have been put into production.

Among them, the most representative is the Indonesian Marine Fisheries Center Project, which is a large-scale project with an investment amount of 5 billion yuan. It plans to build ten fishery bases. The first base is located in Tuban, East Java Province, Indonesia, and has been put into operation with an annual planned output of 500000 tons. In addition, the first base of the Indonesian Marine Fisheries Center project jointly invested by Shengtian (Fuqing) Food Co., Ltd. and Indonesia Sanlin Group has been put into operation in March 2022.

China-Indonesia "two countries and two parks" project not only strengthens the complementarity of industrial cooperation between Fujian and Indonesia, extends the advantageous industrial chain and supply chain, expands the potential of marine cooperation, deepens the close cooperation of fisheries, but also provides a broad space for the close exchanges between the two sides, which has become an important way for Fujian Province to dock the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP). It is estimated that in the future, through the cooperation platform of "two countries and two parks", nearly 5 million tons of fish catch and minced fish will be transported back to Yuanhong District for deep processing every year, which shows the great potential and influence of this project.

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<sup>7</sup> Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan Republik Indonesia. "Nilai ekspor-impor produk perikanan Indonesia periode Januari-Juli 2022 [Export-import value of Indonesian fisheries products for the period January-July 2022]." 2022. <https://kkp.go.id/djpdspkp/artikel/44876-nilai-ekspor-impor-produk-perikanan-indonesia-periode-januari-juli-2022>.



In the maritime cooperation, port cooperation between China and Indonesia has emerged as a pivotal avenue for bolstering their oceanic economic ties. This collaboration manifests in several distinct modalities: Investment-driven Port Development: For instance, the comprehensive international port in Indonesia's Jambi province, initiated in July 2016, saw investment from the Hebei Port Group. This venture was facilitated and managed by China's Fuhai Group, responsible for attracting further investments.

Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) Model: In November 2010, Feng Zhenglin, the Deputy Minister of China's Ministry of Transport, visited Indonesia. The two nations concurred on a cooperative intent, with Chinese enterprises assisting in the development projects of the Tanjung Perak port in East Java and the Socah port. These projects are to be jointly undertaken by China Harbour Engineering Company and Indonesia's third port management company, utilizing the BOOT approach.

Sister Port Collaboration: This model primarily focuses on fostering cooperation and exchanges between two ports. For example, in October 2015, the Shenzhen Port inked a 'Friendly Port Agreement' with the Indonesia National Port Corporation, aiming to amplify cargo transportation and personnel exchanges between Shenzhen and Tanjung Priok ports. Furthermore, in May 2017, the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port entered into a 'Sister Port Memorandum of Cooperation' with Tanjung Priok port.

Turnkey Project Contracting: This modality involves one company offering comprehensive engineering services to another. A case in point is the agreement between China Harbour Company and Indonesia's PT. Cemindo Gemilang in Jakarta on November 30, 2013, for the EPC project of the Karang Taraje port. This encompassed the design, procurement, construction, and management of various infrastructures, including breakwaters, connecting bridges, berths, and docks. The project was officially handed over to the Indonesian company in April 2016 upon completion and verification.

The two countries have always maintained close cooperation in offshore energy exploration and development, and oil trade and cooperative development are important forms of cooperation. As far as offshore oil and gas exploitation is concerned, Indonesia is extremely rich in oil and gas resources, and it is the only OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in Southeast Asia. As early as 2002, China's CNOOC signed a 25-year natural gas development and use agreement with Indonesia's national oil company. In addition, PetroChina has been operating Jabung Workspace since 2002, and the

average daily output has been stable at over 50,000 BOEPD since 2006. Jabung's first PSC was signed in 1993 for a period of 30 years. During this period, Jabung has produced more than 405 MMBOE and created employment opportunities for more than 50,000 people. In 2021, Jabung officially obtained the contract extension of Jabung workspace operators in 2023-2043.<sup>8</sup> China and Indonesia have made some achievements in renewable energy cooperation. In 2019, China Nengjian Group signed a cooperation agreement with Indonesian National Power Company (PLN) on the offshore wind power project in Texak, Palau, Indonesia. Located in the northern waters of Java Island, Indonesia, the project is the first offshore wind power project in Indonesia. China Nengjian Group will provide wind power generation equipment and technical support to help Indonesia improve its renewable energy generation capacity.

Marine tourism in China and Indonesia has made remarkable progress in the past few years. Although the number of tourists affected by the pandemic has decreased, the momentum of tourism driving economic growth is still strong in the post-pandemic era. The two countries are rich in marine resources and beautiful natural scenery, attracting a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. As a world population and economic power, China has also become an important tourist source country in Southeast Asia. According to statistics, before the Covid-19 pandemic, China was the second largest contributor to Indonesian foreign tourists.<sup>9</sup>

In order to promote the development of tourism, the two governments have signed a number of memorandums of cooperation and established bilateral cooperation mechanisms, including simplifying visa procedures, opening a number of direct flights and promoting the tourism market. In July 2000, the Chinese and Indonesian governments signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Cooperation, and in November 2001, they signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Implementation Plan, which marked the beginning of institutionalization of tourism cooperation between the two sides. In 2002, the first meeting of tourism ministers of ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea was held in Bali, Indonesia, and since then, multilateral

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<sup>8</sup> PetroChina. "PetroChina Officially Begins Jabung PSC Extension Period 2023-2043." <http://www.petrochina.co.id/SitePages/NewsSingle.aspx?par=351665a2-0a7f-48e5-8c70>.

<sup>9</sup> Republika Online. "Sebelum pandemi, China penyumbang wisman terbesar kedua ke Indonesia [Before the pandemic, China was the second-largest contributor of foreign tourists to Indonesia]." (Date not provided). <https://ekonomi.republika.co.id/berita/roxjlb370/sebelum-pandemi-china-penyumbang-wisman-terbesar-kedua-ke-indonesia>.

tourism cooperation with ASEAN countries and other countries has been increased.

Under the bilateral cooperation mechanism, the two countries have increased the promotion and market development of tourism products. In 2019, the “Wonderful Indonesia” promotion conference led by Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy was held in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Shenyang, Nanjing, Tianjin and Xi’an. The two sides opened a number of direct flights. At the 2023 ASEAN Tourism Forum, Indonesia released two tourism recovery strategies, mainly involving updating visa policies and implementing tourism promotion plans. Through this forum, Indonesia has also reached a number of agreements with other ASEAN countries, including promoting mutual recognition arrangements for tourism professionals, so as to improve the tourism professionals capacity of ASEAN countries and develop a responsible, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry. In the meantime, the amount of tourism cooperation between Indonesia and all parties reached 15.8 million US dollars. The two sides have opened a number of direct flights. Since 2019, several Indonesian airlines have added direct flights to key tourist cities in China. For example, Sriwijaya Air in Indonesia opened a direct flight from Nanning to Manado in April 2019, and Citilink Airlines in Indonesia started direct flights from Kunming to Solo and Yogyakarta in July 2019.

### **Maritime Security Cooperation**

Compared with the United States, Japan and Australia, the military cooperation between China and Indonesia has developed slowly. Before 2011, despite some cooperation, military exchange projects were limited, which was influenced by Indonesia’s domestic politics. In 1965, there was a coup in Indonesia, and the Indonesian armed forces seized power. President Suharto claimed that the Communist Party of China (CPC) instigated a coup in communist party, Indonesia, and broke off diplomatic relations with China after taking office. Relations between the two countries only improved after the fall of Suharto’s regime in 1998. In April 2005, China and Indonesia signed a joint declaration on the establishment of strategic partnership, which laid the foundation for the relations between the two countries. It is mentioned that China and Indonesia promote cooperation in defense and military fields, promote the development of their respective defense industries, establish a defense security consultation mechanism, and promote cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence departments of the two countries.

Subsequently, the military cooperation between the two countries mainly focused on defense industry cooperation. In July 2005, during President Yudhoyono's visit to China, Indonesia and China signed a memorandum on defense technology cooperation. According to the provisions of the 2005 Sino-Indonesia Declaration, the two countries established a Sino-Indonesia defense security consultation meeting in 2006, which provided a forum for the two sides to discuss regional and international development, defense technology cooperation, military education exchanges and joint military exercises. In March 2007, two Chinese People's Liberation Army naval warships visited Indonesia, which was another event that marked the warming of defense relations between China and Indonesia. In November 2007, the defense ministers of the two countries formally signed a defense cooperation agreement in Beijing. In January 2008, Cao Gangchuan, then China's defense minister, began a five-day visit to Jakarta.

The main reasons for the slow development of military relations between the two countries are as follows: 1. The time when Indonesia first contacted China and demanded to strengthen military ties between the two sides was the period when the US arms embargo against Indonesia was still valid; The Indonesian government may want to use the China card to force the Washington government to quickly restore US-Indonesia military relations; 2. China's weapon system has a poor reputation in terms of quality, durability and after-sales service; 3. Indonesian distrust of the China People's Liberation Army and China's long-term intention to the South China Sea.<sup>10</sup>

In 2011, the Chinese and Indonesian armed forces jointly trained for the first time.<sup>11</sup> Since then, the military cooperation between the two countries has been strengthened and the forms have become more diversified. On July 3rd, 2012, China and Indonesia began a half-month "Sharp Blade-2012" joint training, which will be divided into equipment display, mixed training and comprehensive drills. The special warfare players of both sides will jointly carry out training in shooting, parachuting, aircraft landing, search and penetration, comprehensive drills and other contents, exchange experience in special operations, and

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<sup>10</sup> Storey, I. J. "Indonesia's China policy in the new order and beyond: Problems and prospects." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (2000): 145-174.

<sup>11</sup> 徐蕊 [Xu Rui]. (2011, June 7). "中国人民解放军和印尼国民军举行特种部队联合训练 [The Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Indonesian National Army hold joint special forces training]." [http://www.asean-china-center.org/2011-06/07/c\\_13915428.htm](http://www.asean-china-center.org/2011-06/07/c_13915428.htm). Diakses pada: 12/06/2023..

strengthen and consolidate the friendship between the two armies.<sup>12</sup>On November 11, 2013, the Special Forces of the Chinese Air Force and the Indonesian Air Force jointly held a training ceremony for anti-terrorism military exercises code named “Airborne Sharp Blade-2013” at Bandung Suleiman Air Force Airport in West Java, Indonesia.<sup>13</sup>On April 23, 2014, the “Maritime Cooperation - 2014” multinational maritime joint exercise was held in the sea area near Qingdao. Indonesia’s “Banjarmasin” dock landing ship participated in the exercise.<sup>14</sup> On March 26, 2015, witnessed by President Xi Jinping and President Joko Widodo of Indonesia, Minister of Transport Yang Chuantang and Director of the Indonesian National Search and Rescue Agency Bambang Soelistyo jointly signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Search and Rescue Cooperation between the Ministry of Transport of the People’s Republic of China and the National Search and Rescue Agency of the Republic of Indonesia in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The MOU signed this time is the first cooperation document signed by China and Indonesia in the field of maritime search and rescue, and will lay a solid foundation for the two countries to continue to carry out and deepen maritime search and rescue cooperation smoothly in the future.<sup>15</sup>In 2016, the “komodo-2016” multilateral humanitarian relief and disaster reduction exercise hosted by the Indonesian Navy was opened in Padang, the capital of West Sumatra Island, Indonesia, on the morning of 12th. The Weifang Ship and Changxing Island Ship of the Chinese Navy attended the ship parade ceremony on behalf of the Chinese Navy.<sup>16</sup>

In September 2018, China and Indonesia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Cooperation. This memorandum of

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<sup>12</sup> Government of the People’s Republic of China. (2012, July 3). “中国和印尼特种部队反恐联合训练举行开训仪式 [China and Indonesia’s special forces anti-terrorism joint training holds opening ceremony].” [https://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-07/03/content\\_2175935.htm](https://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-07/03/content_2175935.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Sina Military News. (2013, November 12). “China and Indonesia jointly conduct ‘Airborne Blade-2013’ anti-terrorism military exercise.” <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/2013-11-12/0749749082.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Government of the People’s Republic of China. (2014, April 23). ““海上合作-2014”多国海上联合演习在青岛举行 [“Maritime Cooperation-2014” multinational maritime joint exercise held in Qingdao].” [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-04/23/content\\_2664849.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-04/23/content_2664849.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Embassy of China in Indonesia. (2015, August 5). “中印尼签署海上搜救首个合作文件 [China and Indonesia sign their first cooperation document on maritime search and rescue].” [http://id.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/zgyyn/201508/t20150805\\_2084253.htm](http://id.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/zgyyn/201508/t20150805_2084253.htm).

<sup>16</sup> People’s Daily Military. (2016, April 13). ““科摩多-2016”联合演习在印尼巴东开幕 [“Komodo-2016” joint exercise opens in Padang, Indonesia].” <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0413/c1011-28272687.html>.

understanding aims to strengthen the cooperation between the two countries in the maritime field, covering maritime security and other fields. Since then, China Indonesia maritime security cooperation has been further strengthened.

On the morning of May 8, 2021, the Southern Theater Naval High Sea Training Formation held a joint maritime exercise with the Indonesian Navy in the waters near Jakarta, Indonesia. The Chinese missile frigates “Liuzhou” and “Suqian” participated in the exercise with the Indonesian frigates “Usman Harun” and “Halasan Yang”. The exercise included communication exercises Joint search and rescue and formation movement.<sup>17</sup>At the end of May 2021, China actively assisted in the rescue and salvage of Indonesian wrecked submarines.<sup>18</sup>It highlights the friendship of cooperation between the Chinese and Indonesian armed forces.

The literature on China-Indonesia maritime cooperation covers a range of topics, emphasizing the complexities and potential of this bilateral relationship. Key areas of focus include maritime security threats, opportunities for cooperation in the South China Sea, and the broader regional context. Studies like those by Lestari et al (2022) and Setiyawan et al (2022) analyze the current state of security cooperation and the dynamics of conflict in the South China Sea, highlighting opportunities that can be turned into beneficial cooperation. Ramadhani’s (2016) work examines Indonesia’s role as a non-claimant state in the South China Sea, exploring how cooperation can stabilize regional security and foster unity. While these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to focus on high-level strategic and security aspects, leaving room for more detailed exploration in certain areas.

Several gaps are evident in the existing literature. The literature may lack a long-term strategic analysis of China-Indonesia maritime cooperation, especially considering the evolving geopolitical landscape and global power shifts.

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China. (2021, May 9). “中国印尼海军举行海上联合演练 [China and Indonesia’s navies hold joint maritime exercise].” <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/jsxd/ly/4884820.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China. (2021, May 27). “道之所在 行胜于言，中方积极协助救援打捞印尼失事潜艇 [Where there’s a will, there’s a way; China actively assists in the rescue and salvage of the Indonesian submarine accident].” <http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/xwfy/lxjzhzt/2021njzh/2021n5y/4886262.html>.



## Challenges in China Indonesia Maritime Cooperation

### Disputes and illegal fishing in the South China Sea

The disputes in the South China Sea are complicated. There is no territorial sovereignty dispute between China and Indonesia in the South China Sea, and Indonesia is not a country claiming sovereignty in the South China Sea. The South China Sea dispute between the two countries is about the coincidence of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone and China's nine-dash line. The South China Sea dispute between the two countries is often intertwined with illegal fishing. The national loss caused by illegal fishing in Indonesia can reach 240 trillion Rupiah every year.<sup>19</sup> According to relevant statistics, in 2019, 511 illegal fishing boats were arrested on the Indonesian border, including 280 Vietnamese, 100 Philippine, 60 Thai, 40 Malaysian, 30 Indonesian and one China.<sup>20</sup> The illegal fishing dispute between China and Indonesia has already appeared as early as 2005. On September 19th, 2005, China's fishing boat "Fuyuan Fishing No.132" was chased and shelled by the Indonesian navy in the waters of Arafura, Papua, Indonesia, causing one death and two injuries.<sup>21</sup> In early December, 2014, Indonesia seized 22 large fishing boats from China illegally fishing in the southern waters of Papua Province.<sup>22</sup> In 2015, the Indonesian navy and marine department sank 41 fishing boats that were found to be involved in illegal fishing by the court. According to Indonesian and Malaysian media reports, these fishing boats are from China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.<sup>23</sup> In May 2016, the Indonesian navy seized a China fishing boat named "Gui Bei Yu" in the sea area, claiming that the fishing boat was suspected of illegal fishing in its sea

<sup>19</sup> Maarif, S. D. (2021, October 19). Ancaman Illegal Fishing: Arti, Dampak dan Hukumnya di Indonesia [Threat of Illegal Fishing: Meaning, Impact, and Law in Indonesia]. Tirto.id. <https://tirto.id/ancaman-illegal-fishing-arti-dampak-dan-hukumnya-di-indonesia-gjlW>.

<sup>20</sup> Dewi, E. M. N., & Maarif, D. (2022). Indonesia's Policy Regarding To Combat With Iuu Fishing Through Joko Widodo's Government Sinking Ships Policy (2014-2019). *Sriwijaya Journal Of International Relations*, 2(2), 12-24.

<sup>21</sup> Xinhua News. (2005, September 26). 福远渔132号事件中国工作组抵达印尼开展工作 [Chinese delegation arrives in Indonesia to address the "Fuyuan Yu 132" incident]. Sina News. <https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-09-26/23467870607.shtml>.

<sup>22</sup> On.cc東網. (2014, December 9). 印尼扣押22艘涉非法捕魚中國漁船 [Indonesia detains 22 Chinese fishing boats suspected of illegal fishing]. [https://hk.on.cc/cn/bkn/cnt/news/20141209/bkncn-20141209193623146-1209\\_05011\\_001.html](https://hk.on.cc/cn/bkn/cnt/news/20141209/bkncn-20141209193623146-1209_05011_001.html).

<sup>23</sup> BBC News 中文. (2015, May 20). 印尼炸沉中国等地41艘非法捕捞渔船 [Indonesia sinks 41 illegal fishing boats, including Chinese vessels]. [https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/world/2015/05/150520\\_indonesia\\_fishing\\_boat\\_sink](https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/world/2015/05/150520_indonesia_fishing_boat_sink).

area. China made solemn representations to Indonesia on this incident. In June of the same year, an Indonesian warship fired warning shots at several China fishing boats illegally fishing there, and detained one of them and its crew. On the 19th, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China confirmed this incident, saying that in this incident, a fishing boat in China was damaged, a crew member was injured, and a fishing boat and seven crew members on board were detained by Indonesia. China solemnly condemned the Indonesian warship for “abusing force”.<sup>24</sup> Indonesian President Jokowi used KRI Imam Bonjol frigate to visit Natuna to declare Indonesia’s sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> In addition, Indonesia’s oil and gas resources exploitation activities in disputed waters were also opposed by the China government, which triggered tensions. After Indonesia started drilling activities, China coast guard vessels confronted Indonesian coast guard vessels in the nearby waters and wrote to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry requesting to stop drilling activities in disputed waters.<sup>26</sup> All the above incidents pose a potential threat to the maritime cooperation between China and Indonesia.

### **Indonesia’s great power balance strategy triggered China’s vigilance**

Indonesia’s foreign policy adheres to free and active. In order to counter China’s influence in the South China Sea, Indonesia actively seeks cooperation with foreign countries such as the United States and Japan in maritime security cooperation. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis clearly put forward the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” at the Shangri-la dialogue Conference and emphasized the important role of Indonesia in it. In June 2019, the “Indo-Pacific Strategy Report” issued by the US Department of

<sup>24</sup> RFI - Radio France Internationale. (2016, June 21). “印尼今年已三次武力警告中国渔船非法捕捞 美促和平解决争端 [Indonesia has issued three military warnings to Chinese fishing boats for illegal fishing this year; the U.S. urges peaceful resolution].” <https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD/20160621-%E5%8D%B0%E5%B0%BC%E4%BB%8A%E5%B9%B4%E5%B7%B2%E4%B8%89%E6%AC%A1%E6%AD%A6%E5%8A%9B%E8%AD%A6%E5%91%8A%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E6%B8%94%E8%88%B9%E9%9D%9E%E6%B3%95%E6%8D%95%E6%8D%9E-%E7%BE%8E%E4%BF%83%E5%92%8C%E5%B9%B3%E8%A7%A3%E5%86%B3%E4%BA%89%E7%AB%AF>.

<sup>25</sup> BBC News Indonesia. (2016, June 23). “Tiba di Natuna, Jokowi gelar rapat di KRI yang tembak kapal Cina [Arriving in Natuna, Jokowi holds a meeting on the KRI that shot at the Chinese ship].” [https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2016/06/160623\\_indonesia\\_jokowi\\_natuna](https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/06/160623_indonesia_jokowi_natuna). Accessed on 25 Jan 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Allard, T., Lamb, K., & Da Costa, A. B. (2021, December 1). “EXCLUSIVE China protested Indonesian drilling, military exercises.” Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-china-protested-indonesian-drilling-military-exercises-2021-12-01/>.

Defense pointed out that Indonesia, as a “key country” in ASEAN, is one of the core forces for the United States to ensure peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. In February, 2022, the Biden administration positioned Indonesia as a priority regional partner in the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.

Indonesia also regards America’s Indo-Pacific strategy as an opportunity for cooperation. In October 2020, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno said that Indonesia attaches great importance to its strategic partnership with the United States, and the two countries are committed to promoting open, inclusive, transparent and rule-based Indo-Pacific cooperation. In this context, Indonesia and the United States carried out high-frequency joint exercises. These include the Super Garuda Shield joint military exercise held in the South China Sea.

Indonesia has also strengthened its security cooperation with Japan in the South China Sea. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced at a news conference after being invited to Bogor Palace by Indonesian President Joko Widodo that Japan and Indonesia will cooperate closely on regional issues including North Korea and the South China Sea<sup>27</sup>.

## **Nationalisme in Indonesia**

Nationalism in Indonesia can be traced back to the early 20th century, when Indonesia was a Dutch colony. This sentiment reached its climax during Indonesia’s independence movement (1945-1949). However, nationalist sentiment did not fade after Indonesia’s independence. In the decades after independence, Indonesian political leaders, including the first President Sukarno and the second President Suharto, used nationalist sentiment to consolidate their power. They emphasized Indonesia’s national identity and independence to counter the influence of foreign forces, especially during the Cold War. In the 21st century, Indonesia’s nationalist sentiment still exists, especially on some issues. For example, the Basuki Tjahaja Purnama incident in the 2014 general election. He is the first Chinese-Indonesia to serve as the governor of Jakarta, and a very few Christians in Indonesian politics. In 2017, he sought re-election but was unsuccessful. The provincial election at that time took place amidst heightened religious tensions and growing public sentiment of exclusion.

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<sup>27</sup> Sarah, S., Widodo, W., Yusnaldi, Y., Widodo, P., & Saragih, H. J. R. (2022). “Indonesia’s Security Dilemma in the Tension Between the United States and China in the South China Sea Conflict.” *JESS (Journal of Education on Social Science)* 6(1), 44-52.

He was convicted of blasphemy for citing a verse from the Quran, sentenced to two years in prison, and began serving his sentence in May 2017. He was released on January 24, 2019.<sup>28</sup>

Under the exaggeration of nationalist sentiment, some projects of China in Indonesia are also facing the risk of being politicized. For example, Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, a landmark project between China and Indonesia, is considered as a debt trap of China.<sup>29</sup>In addition, reports of illegal workers from China have also triggered xenophobia against China. Enterprises from China are also facing difficulties in localization<sup>30</sup>. There have been a series of disputes between China employees and Indonesian local employees, and even demonstrations, such as the riots in PT Gunbuster Nickel Industri (GNI) on January 15th, 2023.

### **Solutions for deepening maritime cooperation between the two countries**

*The first*, strengthening political mutual trust is an important prerequisite for China and Indonesia to strengthen maritime cooperation. This requires frequent exchanges and dialogues between the two countries at all levels, especially at the high level. The exchange of high-level visits can not only deepen the personal relationship between the leaders of the two countries, but also provide a guarantee for the stability of bilateral relations at a critical moment. In addition, through political dialogue, the two countries can have an in-depth exchange of views on major issues, enhance understanding and eliminate misunderstandings and doubts.

At the same time, enhancing political mutual trust also requires the two countries to give full respect and understanding on issues involving each other's core interests and major concerns. For example, China needs to understand and respect Indonesia's position and concerns on the South China Sea issue, and Indonesia also needs to understand and respect China's position and concerns on the South China Sea issue. Only

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<sup>28</sup> CNN Indonesia. (2020, October 20). "RI-Jepang Sepakat Kerja Sama Terkait Isu Laut China Selatan." Sekretariat Nasional ASEAN - Indonesia. <https://setnasasean.id/news/read/ri-jepang-sepakat-kerja-sama-terkait-isu-laut-china-selatan>.

<sup>29</sup> BBC News Chinese. (2019, April 17). "[Indonesian presidential election: Historical anti-Chinese and Chinese exclusion incidents]." <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-47946596>.

<sup>30</sup> CNBC Indonesia. (2023, April 14). "Proyek Kereta Cepat Bukti RI Masuk Jebakan Utang China? [Is the High-Speed Train Project Proof that Indonesia is Falling into China's Debt Trap?]." <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20230414163523-4-430086/proyek-kereta-cepat-bukti-ri-masuk-jebakan-utang-china>.

on the basis of mutual respect and understanding can the two countries find a solution to the problem and promote the development of maritime cooperation.

In addition, the two countries can provide more platforms and channels for political exchanges between the two countries by establishing various political dialogue mechanisms, such as strategic dialogue and security dialogue. Through these dialogue mechanisms, the two countries can conduct regular exchanges and consultations on various issues, handle and solve possible problems and contradictions in time, and thus maintain the stability and development of bilateral relations.

*Second*, Strengthen economic cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Economic cooperation is an important pillar of bilateral relations. In the field of marine economy, China and Indonesia can achieve mutual benefit and win-win through sharing resources, technical exchanges and market opening. For example, the two countries can conduct in-depth cooperation in the fields of marine science and technology, marine resources development and marine environmental protection, and share the fruits of economic development. At the same time, by establishing closer economic and trade relations, such as setting up a free trade zone and optimizing trade policies, the economic mutual benefit between the two countries can be further enhanced and a strong economic foundation can be provided for maritime cooperation.

Humanities exchange is another important pillar of bilateral relations. Strengthening cultural exchanges can enhance the friendship and understanding between the two peoples and create a good social atmosphere for the development of bilateral relations. For example, the two countries can hold cultural festivals, academic seminars, youth exchange activities, etc., so that the two peoples have more opportunities to understand each other's culture and society. This will not only enhance the sense of identity and support of the two peoples for maritime cooperation, but also provide a broader social foundation for economic cooperation between the two countries.

Generally speaking, economic cooperation and cultural exchanges complement each other. Economic cooperation can provide material basis for people-to-people exchanges, while people-to-people exchanges can provide social support for economic cooperation. Therefore, when strengthening maritime cooperation, China and Indonesia should attach importance to both economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, so that they can promote each other and jointly promote the in-depth development of maritime cooperation.

*Third*, Expand cooperation and strengthen cooperation in non-traditional security: maritime security issues, such as piracy, illegal fishing and marine pollution, not only affect the economic interests of the two countries, but also pose a threat to the marine ecological environment and regional security and stability. Therefore, it is necessary for China and Indonesia to cooperate on these issues and jointly meet the challenges.

First of all, the two countries can jointly crack down on piracy and illegal fishing by sharing intelligence and joint patrols. This can not only protect the marine resources and shipping safety of the two countries, but also maintain regional peace and stability.

Secondly, the two countries can cooperate in marine environmental protection. For example, the two countries can jointly carry out marine pollution control projects to reduce marine garbage and plastic pollution and protect the marine ecological environment. At the same time, the two countries can also cooperate in marine scientific research and jointly study the methods of marine ecological protection and sustainable utilization.

In addition, the two countries can also provide more platforms and channels for maritime security cooperation between the two countries by establishing maritime security cooperation mechanisms, such as maritime security dialogues and joint maritime security exercises. Through these cooperation mechanisms, the two countries can conduct regular exchanges and consultations on various maritime security issues, and deal with and solve possible problems and contradictions in time, thus maintaining the stability and development of maritime cooperation between the two countries.

Generally speaking, coping with maritime security challenges together is an important direction for China and Indonesia to strengthen maritime cooperation, and it is also an important way for the two countries to share maritime interests and maintain maritime peace and stability.

## **Conclusion**

China and Indonesia, as two important countries in Asia, have constructed their own unique identities and norms in the international community. These identities and norms are not only based on the historical and cultural traditions of the two countries, but also influenced by their interaction. China's "peaceful development" and Indonesian's "independent and active" foreign policy both emphasize the importance



of cooperation and dialogue. This provides a basis for the two countries to establish mutual trust and common norms in maritime cooperation.

Under China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Indonesian global maritime fulcrum strategy, the cooperation between the two countries is not only based on economic interests, but also based on their common understanding and norms of marine cooperation. This kind of cognition and norm emphasizes the importance of cooperation, not competition or confrontation. The maritime cooperation between the two countries also reflects the status change of China and Indonesia on the international stage. With the economic growth and the promotion of international influence, China and Indonesia are increasingly regarded as important participants in the region and even the world. This change in status requires the two countries not only to safeguard their own national interests, but also to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining regional peace and stability. Therefore, both sides recognize that deepening maritime cooperation is not only beneficial to bilateral relations, but also conducive to maintaining peace and prosperity in the entire Asian region.

However, this change of identity also brings new challenges. With the increasing influence of the two countries in international affairs, they are also more vulnerable to external factors, such as competition among major powers and geopolitical tensions. This requires the two countries to consider not only bilateral relations, but also the broader international environment in their maritime cooperation.

In addition, the domestic political and social environment of the two countries has also had an impact on maritime cooperation. For example, Indonesia's nationalist sentiment may question cooperation with China, and China's South China Sea policy may also cause Indonesia's concern. In order to overcome these challenges, the two sides need to strengthen communication and dialogue to ensure that maritime cooperation is not interfered by external and internal factors.

In short, from the perspective of constructivism, China-Indonesia maritime cooperation is a continuous social construction process, involving many factors, such as international environment, bilateral relations, domestic politics and so on. Only through constant interaction, communication and cooperation can the two countries build a stable and harmonious maritime relationship and achieve common development goals.

In conclusion, the future of China-Indonesia maritime cooperation holds both promise and complexity. As the regional and global context continues to evolve, the relationship between these two nations will

undoubtedly adapt and change. The insights from this study suggest that a continued commitment to understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect will be key to navigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead. This cooperation is not just significant for China and Indonesia but also has broader implications for regional and even global maritime governance.

**Global Maritime Governance:** Consider the implications of China-Indonesia cooperation in the context of global maritime governance. Collaborate on issues like freedom of navigation, adherence to international maritime law, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

**Response to Global Challenges:** Work together to address global challenges such as climate change, sea-level rise, and international maritime crime. This cooperation can serve as a model for other nations and contribute to global maritime stability and security.

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